EVERY-DAY LIFE IN SOUTH INDIA

THE STORY OF COOPOOSWAMEY

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

POUNDING RICE.

EVERY-DAY LIFE IN SOUTH INDIA

OR

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An Autobiography

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PREFACE.

ONE evening, while conversing with Mr. Knox on the verandah of his house in Coimbatore, he suddenly asked me, 'Why don't you write an account of your life?' I was surprised, and looking at my friend inquiringly I said, 'You do me too much honour, sir. There is little in my life that could interest any one; and I have not sufficient ability: I should not know what to tell, and what to leave untold.'

'If you will only write what you have on various occasions told to me, I am sure that not only will it be interesting, but instructive also. Very little is known of the home life of the Hindus. Books, learned histories, treatises, essays on Indian politics, on mythology, on antiquities, on the manners and customs of the Brahmins, and on other abstruse subjects, are written and published, but very little is known of the ordinary life of the people. Remember that what is familiar and common place to you, is fresh and interesting to us.'

I protested that I was quite unfitted for the task, and begged my friend to excuse me.

'You can at least do this,' said he. 'Write a complete account of all that you can remember of your history and experiences. Make it as picturesque and graphic as you can. Recall and fill in all the conversations that you can remember, and I will correct and arrange your manuscript; I will reject what seems to me unsuitable, and if I can, from my own knowledge of the habits and customs of the people, add anything to your narrative that will make it more clear and acceptable to British and American readers, I will do so.'

To this proposal I agreed. Every week I brought some sheets to Mr. Knox, which he afterwards read to me with alterations and additions of his own; and then we criticised and corrected each other's work.

In this way the present volume, like my life and experiences which it records, grew. That it is not without defects is to be expected; but, as Mr. Knox frequently assured me, that these imperfections will be excused for the sake of the truth of the narrative, and the correct picture of Hindu life that it gives, is my modest hope.

COOPOOSWAMEY.

PLOUGHING.

EVERY-DAY LIFE IN SOUTH INDIA.

CHAPTER I.

THE VILLAGE OF POOTHOOR—MY PARENTS, AND SOME REMINISCENCES OF MY CHILDHOOD.

MY father was a well-to-do farmer in the village of Poothoor, in the Madras Presidency, twenty-five miles from the large and flourishing town of Coimbatore.

Poothoor is not a large village. It has one long, wide street, with low tile-roofed houses, and a picturesque irregular avenue of palm trees, that, growing in front of each house, are watered daily by the women. It is in

this street that the Brahmins live, and all day long they are to be seen, with their white dress, their bare head and shoulders, lounging about, and sitting cross-legged on their verandahs chatting; while the naked children are playing in front, and the women, with their bright silk garments, their hair smoothed with oil, and adorned with jewels and flowers, pass and repass.

The part of the village where the cultivators live, and where my father's house stood, is without order. Each house has a small cleanly-swept piece of ground in front, and a courtyard behind, and these houses and courtyards are separated from each other by narrow zigzag lanes. As my father was one of the richest men in the village, his house had a double story, and was built of brick, with massive, deeply-carved doors.

Most of the houses in this part of the village are built of mud and thatched with straw, and are ornamented on the outside by perpendicular strips of red and white paint. Some are lying deserted and in ruins.

Near the entrance to the village, on a stone platform, under the leafy shade of a large tree, are the village idols—one in the form of a bull, another the image of a fat man with an elephant's head, sitting on a rat, and three in the form of cobras, with head erect and hood spread out, all black with oil, and adorned with small patches of red paint, and occasionally with garlands of flowers. In front of this tree is the village tank, with its grand flights of granite steps, where the villagers bathe and wash their clothes, and whither the women come, morning and evening, with their bright brass water vessels to draw water. A short distance

beyond may be seen the huts of the pariahs, and in another direction those of the despised, degraded leather workers.

The village has its schoolmaster, doctor, goldsmith, carpenter, barber, and washerman; also a small open shop, and a market place.

In describing the village, the dogs, donkeys, and pigs should not be forgotten. Many of the donkeys, having been made to carry the washerman's load before they were strong enough, have bent backs and twisted legs. The black, long-snouted pigs are kept only by the outcast pariahs and leather workers. They, along with the donkeys, the dogs, and the huge unwieldy buffaloes, are the chief scavengers of the village.

My father, who was tall, broad-shouldered, and muscular, was not a bad specimen of a Hindu farmer. His shoulders were a little bent, and he walked in his leather sandals with a slightly slouching gait. His dress consisted of three pieces of white cloth; one worn as a turban, the other thrown loosely over his naked shoulders, and the third fastened round his waist, and tucked up between his legs at his back so as to fall in graceful folds over his thighs, to a little below the knee. In the presence of a superior, he would drop his upper cloth and leave his shoulders bare.

He was fond of a laugh and a gossip, and had a merry twinkle in his eyes; yet his prevailing feelings were inclined to melancholy. Every little disappointment and vexation weighed on his spirits, and he surveyed the future with anxious, troubled thoughts.

Much of his time was occupied, and his mind engaged in petty village quarrels, in plotting against his neighbours, or trying to circumvent their plots against him. The village community presented no picture of a happy family, but was eaten up with jealousy, envy, and distrust.

Although bound to none around him by a single tie of esteem or confidence, he yet never thought of acting independently. He was but a wheel in a great machine—never even in thought separating himself, his interests, and his duties, from those of his class. What they did he would do. When they adopted a new course, so would he.

Although superstitious and faithful in the performance of religious duties, he had small respect either for the priests or for the corrupt Hindu religion. He enjoyed nothing better than a good story at the expense of the gods or the priests. His life was moral, because he had no temptation, and if he told the truth and acted honestly, it was because he saw no advantage to be gained by an opposite course.

My mother, although younger than my father, looked quite as old. She early lost the bloom and freshness of womanhood. I was her second son, and sorrow for the loss of her first-born had helped to injure her health. My father rarely spoke to her, except to give her a command or a rebuke. She was capricious, and often very provoking, like a showery day, now all smiles, then frowns and tears. If thwarted or crossed in her humour, she would sulk whole days together. Instead of listening with attention and sympathy when my

father talked to her, she would turn round, address an order to a servant or fuss about something near her. She usually objected to everything he proposed, and would, as a rule, only agree to his plans after she had been argued and scolded into compliance. I have seen my father, when reproaches and scolding failed to drive her from a bad humour, take a cane and beat her soundly.

My earliest recollections are talks that I had with my mother. One that I remember well was about my curious name of Coopooswamey—the meaning of which is 'manure-god.' 'Your brother,' my mother told me, 'died in infancy, five years before you were born. The astrologer said that some god or demon was jealous, and when you were born he told us that the only way to save your life would be to avert the envy of the god by giving you an ugly name. You were taken outside the house and laid on the dung-heap. Your nose was pierced, and the little silver ring that you now wear was inserted. The astrologer who drew your horoscope told us that you would be exposed to a great danger in your youth, and that if you escaped that your life afterwards would be prosperous.'

'Did his words come true?' I asked.

'Yes,' replied my mother. 'Once, when you were about two years old, you gave me a terrible fright. I left you playing by the side of the hedge in front of the house, and when I went to call you, I saw to my horror a large cobra winding itself round your body and under your legs. You were laughing and crowing, and touching its glistening skin with your chubby hands. The

serpent seemed pleased with your warmth, and with your gentle, childish way of touching it. By a terrible effort I kept from screaming. I knew that if I made a noise or any sudden movement the snake would probably fix its fangs in you, and you would be dead in a few hours. I kept quite still, and at length the cobra observing me, quickly glided into the hedge. Then my screams broke forth as I rushed and caught you in my arms and pressed you to my bosom. The people came running to know what was the matter. When I told them they raised their hands in wonder.'

'Did any one kill the snake?' I asked.

'Kill the snake!' replied my mother. 'We could not do that. It was a god that had come to bless you. Even the shadow of a cobra falling on any one is a good omen. How lucky, then, did we consider you, that the god had even embraced and fondled you!'

'Is that why you so often go to the snake hole near the house with offerings of eggs, camphor, and other things?'

'Yes,' replied my mother; 'I have hardly missed a day in visiting the place where I saw the serpent disappear. Sometimes I break some cocoanuts there, and sacrifice a fowl in honour of the god that was so gracious to you.'

Until four years old I was allowed to run about naked, my only covering, if covering they could be called, being the jewels, the gold earrings and bracelets, the silver anklets and silver waist chain, with which I was adorned.

My father's house, as I have said, was one of the best

in the village. It was constructed in such a way that all the rooms opened into a central hall, a miniature court-yard. The tiled roof sloped inwards on four sides, like a square funnel inverted, leaving a square opening in the middle, through which light and air, the rain in wet weather, and the crows in all weathers, were freely admitted. The roof on the inside, not being bounded by walls, was supported by wooden pillars. A narrow passage led to the hall from the outside, which, with this exception, communicated only with the sky. It was in this hall that, without any covering, I slept on a grass mat, on the mud floor.

Sometimes in the early morning, and especially in the rainy or winter season, when the older people in the house drew their large white sheets closely around them, I used to feel cold ; but no one took much notice of me. My father would say, 'Children and the legs of a stool don't feel cold,' and he would send me out into the sun-shine, telling me that that would warm me. Except in the middle of the day, when every living creature seeks the shade, and when many, tired with their work in the fields, or with their household occupations, in which they had been engaged since sunrise, enjoy the refreshment of a midday sleep, it was my delight to crawl about in the sand, and bask in the sun. Sometimes I played with the village children at shop-keeping. With small stones for money, and sand for articles of merchandise, we bought and sold fruits, grains, betel nuts, and tobacco.

With a staff and a small hole in the ground, we imitated the women in pounding rice. We flew kites, spun tops, and played at marbles. One of our favourite

games was to perform worship. We put a little stone on the ground, imitated the ceremony by which the Brahmin priests suppose they bring the spirit of the god into his stone image, then we prostrated ourselves before our idol, and offered to it pebbles, leaves, and small pieces of wood.

Once a week I was bathed in oil, a most refreshing operation. The oil was rubbed over me and washed off with hot water and vegetable soap. Sometimes, all wet and glittering with oil, I was allowed to trot about for a while in the sun.

It was not till I was three years old that I was weaned ; although long previous to that I ate freely of rice cakes, butter-milk, curry and rice, fruits and sweet-meats.

In all the forms of politeness and the rules of caste I was carefully trained. When any one took notice of me, or gave me a gift of sugar-cane or other sweetmeat, my mother would say, 'Make salaam, make salaam.' I was taught to fold my arms, and look modestly, either on the ground or a little on one side, when I was addressing a superior.

One of my chief pleasures as a child was to watch the women trim and light the little saucer lamps in front of the idols.

Everywhere in India there are idols ; on every high hill and under every green tree. In the temples a light is kept constantly burning in front of the god. By the roadsides, also on the banks of rivers and tanks, there are little earthenware shrines and niches for these saucer lamps. Pious women nightly replenish, trim, and light

them, and on festivals the shrines are ablaze with the twinkling lights.

'What is the use of lighting the lamps every night? Does the god need the light to see with?' I asked my mother once.

'Little boys should not ask questions,' she replied. It is the custom; is not that enough? Our pious ancestors used to do this, and we must do it too.'

This reply did not quite satisfy me, so, after thinking the matter over for a long time, I ventured to ask my father. I was a great favourite with him. For hours together, sitting on the verandah, conversing with grave village elders, he would fondle me in his arms, and keep me lying in his lap. Very rarely, indeed never unless greatly provoked, did he chastise me. He would often speak threateningly, and raise his hand as if to strike, but I knew that it was a mere pretence.

He was sitting alone after supper, smoking a cigar, consisting of a green leaf rolled into a cone and filled with tobacco. The air was deliciously soft and balmy, and the full moon shed a silver radiance wherever its beams fell.

'Sir,' said I, 'why do the women light the little lamps in front of the gods every night?'

'In order to get merit,' he replied.

'Do the gods need the lights to see with?' I asked.

'I don't know,' said he. 'It is a custom handed down by our forefathers.'

'That is what mother told me.'

'Have you been speaking to her about it?'

'Yes; but I was not satisfied with what she said; and I thought you could tell me something more.'

He took two or three puffs of his green leaf cigar, and then said—

'You must not inquire too much about these things; you will only trouble your mind; but, since you have asked me, I can tell you a little more. There is a verse in one of the Puranas which says: "If any one goes to the temple of Siva—the bestower of benefits—and walking round the right side thereof, lights even one lamp, made of clarified cow's butter and a thread from the stalk of the lotus plant, he will escape the curse of transmigration, and obtain heavenly bliss. The god knows those who light the holy lamp, and their sins perish."'

'Only a few of the women light the holy lamps. Why do they not all do it?' I inquired.

'Many are careless about these things,' said he.

'Perhaps they do something else to obtain the god's favour. Do you think that if I were to light one of the lamps in the front of the god that he would do me some good?'

'Oh yes; we ought not to doubt it. I can tell you a story to show you that. In one of the sacred books it is said that, once upon a time, in the middle of the night, the lamp in one of Siva's temples was about to go out, the wick having burnt down to the oil. Just then, a rat that came to drink the oil pulled the wick, so that the lamp burned brightly. Siva, seeing this, was so glad that he appeared to the rat, and transformed it into a mighty emperor, to rule over the three worlds—heaven, earth, and the abyss. In this way the rat was

born on the earth as a great king, and ruled the three worlds.'

'How wonderful!' said I; 'but many people light the lamps, and they never see the god.'

'Now, now, that will do; I cannot talk to you any more on these matters. It is late; go and lie down.'

So saying, my father dismissed me, and I went and lay down on my mat in a corner of the hall.

CHAPTER II.

MY UNCLE AND AUNT IN COIMBATORE—AN IDOL PROCESSION—AN ADVENTURE.

MY father's only sister being married to a gentleman in Coimbatore who held a good appointment as clerk in the collector's office there, I was often taken to see them. My uncle was, like my father, a tall man with large features; and, although somewhat irritable in temper, he usually spoke with a certain deliberation. He was shrewd and straightforward, and, while not lacking in politeness, he seldom hesitated to express his honest thought. It was his straightforwardness and honesty—virtues so rare among Hindus—that had gained for him the confidence of his superiors, and the position of trust which he held in the office.

My aunt was one of the best women I have ever known. She was thoughtful and wise, kind and patient. My father had a great love and respect for her, and also for her husband, so that there was no family with which we had more frequent and familiar intercourse.

On one occasion when I was staying with them, one of the gods was brought in procession past the front of my uncle's house. The priests, musicians, and dancing

women, and a great crowd of people accompanied it. My uncle and aunt, as soon as the god, elevated on a platform and adorned with flowers, reached their door, went out and gave to one of the priests an offering of flowers and fruits.

In the midst of the noise and confusion, a man, whom I recognised as the brother of my uncle's bullock driver, stooped down to me, offered me sweetmeats, and in a kind voice said: 'My darling, my beloved, all are going with the god in procession. Come, I will carry you on my shoulders.'

Nothing loth, I mounted on to his naked shoulder, and with my hand on his head, one leg in front of his breast, and the other behind his back, I looked over the heads of the people at the show. It was a bright and animated spectacle. The god, not very beautiful in itself, a black oily idol, was covered with flowers and jewels: the temple women, decked with ornaments and clad in bright silk, were moving in a rhythmical and graceful manner, and looking about in a bold, unconstrained way. The priests, in white flowing garments, were receiving the offerings of the people, and the crowd that followed and pressed round the god presented a moving mass of bare heads and naked shoulders interspersed by a few turbaned and well-clad people.

My bearer carried me a few yards, turned into a narrow bye-street, and set me down, saying: 'The procession is coming through that street: let us go this way and meet the god there.'

At the end of the lane another man came behind, and, in spite of my cries and struggles, stripped me of my

gold bracelet and necklace. They tried to pull off my gold ring, but I kicked and struggled so much, and the ring fitted so tight, that they could not get it off. Seeing some one coming, they ran away and left me. It was about eight o'clock in the evening, and darkness had set in. As I went along, sobbing aloud, unable to find my way home, afraid of snakes and robbers and evil spirits, Babu, the son of a dancing girl who knew my uncle, met me.

'What is the matter with you?' he asked. 'Who brought you here? Why are you crying? Don't cry;' and taking me by the hand, he led me to his mother's house.

'I found him on the road crying and sobbing, and when I asked him what was wrong, he did not tell me,' said Babu to his mother.

Dancing girls are the only women in India that are not allowed to marry. Although attached to the temple, taking part in almost all the services, and called 'the servants of the god,' they, in private, follow a profession which in every country is looked on with abhorrence.

It being necessary for them to be able to learn the songs which they sing while dancing, they were, till recently, the only women in India who learned to read; and in going into a girls' school to-day it would often be found that all the pupils belong to this class, care not having been taken to exclude them, and respectable people naturally refusing to allow their daughters to associate with them.

They form a distinct and hereditary class. Their sons are usually trained as musicians, and their daughters, if

sufficiently beautiful, as dancing girls. Their ranks are constantly recruited from other castes, it being not uncommon for a mother, if disappointed by the early death of her children, to seek to propitiate the god by vowing her next female child to the service of the temple.

Engaged, as these women are, in the services of the temples, and occupying a recognised social position, they are regarded with a certain amount of respect. Their free, open, unrestrained life gives to many of them a dignity and frank unconsciousness of manner, which contrast favourably with the immodest shyness of most other Hindu and Mohammedan women. The dancing girl in whose house I was took me on her knee, wiped my eyes with one end of her cloth, and spoke soothingly to me.

'Have you had your food?' she inquired. I muttered indistinctly that I had not taken any food, and that I had been carried by my bullock driver's younger brother, while the god was being taken in procession.

'Where is your bracelet?' said she suddenly, in an agitated tone. 'It was a gold one; has any one taken it from you?'

I looked at my hands, and noticing that the bracelet was gone, I told her that it had probably slipped off. She gave me a tumbler of milk, of which I drank a little, and cried to be taken home.

Ordering her horse carriage, she at once set out with me and Babu on the way to my uncle's house.

Meanwhile my aunt, an hour after she had given the offering to the god, called all the children for supper·

Her two sons and her eldest daughter came in, and when she did not see me with them she asked where I was.

'He must be sleeping upstairs,' said her daughter; 'we have not seen him since the procession passed.'

She ran up to look for me, but finding no one there except her youngest daughter, Balambal, who was sleeping on the floor, she thought that I must have gone with her husband, who had followed the procession. When at length he returned alone, she asked him where I was.

'Why do you ask me?' he said, greatly alarmed. 'I did not see him. I followed the procession alone. How can I tell you where he is?'

'What shall I do?' cried my aunt. 'He was here a few minutes ago. I thought he had gone with you. Who can have taken him away?'

'Wait a little,' said my uncle. 'Don't distress yourself till we search for him, and see whether he can be found or not. He cannot be very far away. He will come back all right.'

My uncle then ran out and asked every one if they had seen me. An old woman who lived in the next house said that she saw me standing in front of her door when the god passed.

A shopman said that he saw some one, whom he thought at the time to be one of our servants, carrying me on his shoulder.

'What shall I do?' cried my aunt, when she heard the result of these inquiries. 'I brought him up as tenderly as a parrot. What shall I say to his parents? I do not care so much for the jewels he was wearing.

I shall be satisfied if I can only find him. What am I to do? Whom can I ask? Where am I to search for him in the night?'

She ordered one of her servants to light a lantern, and, with her husband and three servants, she went to report the matter at the police-station.

She got four constables to aid her, and dividing them into three parties—the first consisting of a constable and a servant, the second of herself, another servant, and a constable, and the third of my uncle and two constables—sent them to search diligently the three streets near her house, telling the policemen to blow their whistle whenever they should find me. She herself met me, driving with the dancing girl and her son Babu.

Overjoyed, she caught me in her arms, covered me with kisses, and asked me where I had been. I began to cry, but spoke nothing. The constable, taking out of his pocket a note-book and pencil, and with the air of importance that such men like to put on, asked the dancing girl who she was, whose child I was, how she got possession of me, where we were going at that time of night, what her name was, and bade her give a true account of all these particulars.

'What!' said the dancing girl, 'you speak very authoritatively. Perhaps you do not know who I am. Do not be so rash, or you may lose the uniform you seem so proud of.'

My aunt, becoming suspicious of the dancing girl, took me aside, told me to stop crying, and tell where I had been, and who took me away.

I answered, weeping and with faltering lips, that while I was sitting in the verandah of the house, Babu took me up and carried me to his mother's house.

This falsehood of mine, which, with the lazy indifference to truth so common among the Hindus, I told, confirmed my aunt's suspicions; so she at once ordered the constable to blow his whistle.

'You vile woman,' said the policeman to the dancing girl, 'are you so bold? I will soon teach you. What if you are a rich woman? You did not give me a proper answer; so come down out of your carriage, and go with me to the police-station.' He blew his whistle, and the others answered him.

'Why should I leave my carriage and go to the police-station? What have I done? Do you think I stole the child's jewels?'

'Yes,' said the constable. 'It is evident that you are the thief. If we had not found you, you would have taken the child and thrown him into some well. I believe you were taking him somewhere for that very purpose. Don't try to deceive me with your cunning.'

The dancing girl began to weep and protest; a great crowd collected, and, all together, we went to the police-station, where the dancing girl, her son Babu, and her coachman were searched.

At length, being strictly questioned, I told who had taken me away, and how the dancing girl had found me. She was honourably acquitted; and the jewels

being found in the thief's house, he was convicted, and sentenced to three years' imprisonment.

My uncle and aunt were so overjoyed at getting me and the lost jewels safely back again that they forgot to punish me for the lie I told. During the remainder of my stay I was never again allowed to go out alone.

CHAPTER III.

EDUCATION—THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMASTER.

AT six years of age I was sent to the village school. This step was not taken without a good deal of discussion, and some opposition.

My father was strong for education, but my father's brother, who lived in the same house with us, and shared the farm, thought that I should be brought up as a farmer, and that education was of little value.

'What is the use of sending the boy to school?' my uncle would say. 'A farmer needs no book-learning. Let him learn to manage his farm, and he will do well enough. If he has a letter to write, which need not occur more than once or twice in a lifetime, he can get the village accountant to write it for him. If he should wish to know the sacred books, there are plenty of strolling beggars to recite them to him. Sending him to school will only weaken his health, fill his head with conceit, and unfit him for his work and his position in life. Book-learning, in my experience, breeds nothing but discontent and idleness.'

'I don't agree at all to what you say,' my father would reply, with some heat, 'and I am very sorry that

you should talk like that before the child. Why should he be nothing but a farmer? He need not work in the fields himself. If he can succeed in passing an examination in English, he will be qualified for a post under Government. Perhaps before I die I may see him a village magistrate, or even a Tasildar.'

These talks were often renewed, and were carried on with much spirit. My mother entirely sympathised with the ambitious views of her husband. She had shrewdness enough to see that the only path to any position of influence or consideration, either in our own village or elsewhere, was through education. Neither she nor my father valued it in the least degree for its own sake, as a means of training the mind and acquiring knowledge, but simply as the only way of getting on in the world. One day, when my father and uncle and two or three others were discussing and chatting together, Runga Rao, the village schoolmaster, joined the group on the verandah. His face was far from prepossessing, and was too true an index of his character. He had a habit of knitting his brows over his small twinkling eyes, which made them look as if deeper in his head than they really were. He had high cheek-bones, a hooked nose, and sharp lips; and he seldom looked you straight in the face, but would turn his head a little to one side, and glance at you from the corners of his eyes. One could seldom be certain in an important matter whether he were expressing his own opinions or not. He seemed always to be considering, not what was the truth in the matter, but what, in the circumstances, it would be prudent to

say. He was a Hindu of the old school,—devotedly attached to the old state of things, which, with much grief and vexation, he saw passing away. He was a bigot in religion, and was almost the only man in the village who stood up for Hinduism in all its forms.

'How do you do, Runga Rao? You are looking dull to-day. The draught does not trouble you, does it?' said my father, greeting him by raising his folded hands to his breast.

'There are worse things than draught,' said the schoolmaster.

'Has your wife presented you with a daughter?' said my uncle.

'No, not that either; although that would be bad enough,' replied Runga Rao.

'Speaking of that,' said my father, 'you know Periah Swamy. I met him to-day looking very dejected. His family are all girls, and he has just had another. Guess you what he said.'

'What was it?'

'What great sin have I committed that I should have another daughter?'

'Poor man!' said my uncle, laughing. 'He is to be pitied. The cost of their marriages will ruin him.'

'I have seen one of these new-fangled deputy inspectors of schools to-day,' said the Brahmin. 'He had the impudence to tell me that my school was old-fashioned—that it was behind the age; and he advised me to send my son to Coimbatore to be trained in the Normal School.'

'What did you say to him?' asked my father.

'I told him that what was good enough for our forefathers was good enough for us—that I could do without a Government grant, if I must leave the good old customs to get it.'

'These new notions are spreading very fast,' said my uncle.

'Since Aya Pillay got his B.A. degree, two or three other lads have been seized with the same mania. They will have nothing but an English education. For my part, I don't see what a farmer wants with education at all.'

'There I don't agree with you,' said my father. 'If a man can't read and check his own accounts and title-deeds, he is at the mercy of those who can, and who may put anything they like in the paper they make him sign. I should have been cheated often if I had not known how to read and do accounts.'

'There is a good deal in that,' said the schoolmaster, 'and that is just what I teach; but what is the use of all this high English education? What good does it do? It is all very well for those who can get Government employment; but they are only one in ten. They come back from their college to the village, and sneer at everything around them.'

'They get just enough education to make them proud and discontented with their position,' said my uncle.

'I met one of these graduates the other day,' continued the schoolmaster, 'and I asked him to tell me what good this education was doing. He said that it was the only way of getting a Government appointment.'

'Is there any benefit besides that?' I asked. He tried hard to mention some, but completely failed. I then asked him to tell me some of its evils, and I was surprised to see how quickly and easily he could enumerate the evils, although he could say nothing on the other side.'

'I have noticed,' said my uncle, 'that these men who spend ten or twelve years in acquiring all their learning make very little use of it afterwards. They pore over their books before an examination, and afterwards pitch them all away.'

'We interrupted you,' said my father to the schoolmaster. 'Tell us what evils he mentioned.'

'He said,' replied the schoolmaster, 'that this high education enables men to do more evil than they could otherwise do.'

'Makes stupid rogues clever ones,' I said.

'Yes, that is what it does,' he replied.

'Again, it makes men discontented. Instead of doing any work, they simply grumble against the Government and everything around them. It does not qualify them for any business or profession. It frees them from religious restraint, destroys their faith in their own religion, and leaves them quite indifferent to every other; so that they practise without compunction many vices that they would otherwise have been afraid to commit.'

'Your friend was at least candid,' said my father. 'It is true that many of these men fail to obtain the employment they desire, and therefore become discontented, but they are not idler than others who have had no education. See how many in every village lounge

about doing nothing. They are, indeed, somewhat contented with their life; they don't grumble and complain so much as those who have passed examinations; but it is just because they have no hope or expectation of rising out of their position. I have been thinking of sending my son to your school.'

'I shall be glad to receive him. How old is he?'

'He was six years old last March. I will consult the astrologer as to a propitious day for his commencing his studies, and then I will bring him to you.'

'Very good; do so,' said Runga Rao.

The village school in which Runga Rao, in an old-fashioned way, strove to impart the rudiments of learning to his pupils, was held in an open shed near the temple. Underneath the tiled roof and dingy rafters, thick with dust and cobwebs, sat the scholars cross-legged on the earthen floor. On the back wall of the shed was a stone on which the image of the belly god was carved, and the only articles of furniture in the school were the grass mat on which Runga Rao sat, the small desk, one foot high, in which he kept the school register, and the cane with which he administered chastisement. As a young, unbroken colt gazes wistfully at the sober cart-horses harnessed and tamed to their task, and then, in the exuberance of life and freedom, snorts and bounds away, often had I looked into the open school-shed, and with careless awe and wondering anticipation listened to the hum and roar of the boys shouting their lessons and committing them to memory.

Before introducing me to Runga Rao and placing me under his care, my father took me to the temple. Passing

through the massive gates into the temple courtyard, with its high, strong stone wall, we ascended the steps of the temple proper, and stood under its gloomy roof in front of the god. After prostrating himself in worship, my father, with the tears streaming down his cheeks, stood up and prayed.

'O god Subramonien, grant to my son, whom you have so graciously given to me, long life and the blessing of education.'

'Pray,' said he, turning to me; 'pray for health and the riches of knowledge.'

I folded my hands, and joined my requests to his.

Two days after, we went again to the temple with an offering of rice, money, plantain fruits, betel nut, and flowers. Other boys, with their parents, were also present.

The priest, with an iron style, wrote the letters of the alphabet on three palmyra leaves, which, with other blank leaves, were tied together by a string. They were to be gradually written upon, and were to serve as my lesson book. Taking the gifts and palmyra books from all the boys, the priest placed them in front of the idol, and while we all prostrated ourselves he performed worship on our behalf, and invoked the favour of the god on those of us who were about to go to school for the first time. He then pronounced the letters that he had written in our book, and caused us all to recite them together after him. Thus my first public lesson was given to me by the priest before the god in the temple.

'Master,' said my father next morning to Runga Rao,

as we presented ourselves before him in front of his school-shed, 'I have brought the pupil I promised you.'

The boys now shouted their lessons with increased energy, to show how diligent they were.

'Silence! Sit down all,' said the master.

The boys dropped down cross-legged on the floor, and chatted to one another in an undertone.

'The knowing man,' said Runga Rao, 'is the strong man. Does your son know any letters?'

'According to my ability I have taught him a little, but he does not know much,' replied my father. 'I expect him to make good progress under your care. You must open his eyes.'

'By the favour of the gods we will do what we can,' said the Brahmin. 'You are a rich man; you must give me good pay.'

'I a rich man!' exclaimed my father. 'See how many I have to support. My son's marriage must be celebrated before long; and you know how much that will cost.'

'I am very poor,' replied the teacher. 'I must eat the plainest food. My income is not sufficient for my support.'

'I'll tell you what I will do,' said my father; 'when my son can read the story of Nulla, I will give you twenty-five rupees, two valuable cloths, and a cow.'

'Won't you give me a monthly fee besides?'

'No; but my son will take to you the usual presents on Saturdays and feast days. What do the other boys give?'

'On the Deebavali feast each boy brings me two

cloths; on the tool feast, a cloth or a jewel, or a gift of money; at harvest time some fruit and grain; every Saturday one piece of firewood, one betel nut, one pie (a small copper coin), and a little oil.'

'That's a good deal; you ought to live well on that. Take good care of my son. Don't beat his eyes, but beat him anywhere else as much as you like. I shall now take leave,' said my father.

'I will do the best I can for the boy,' said Runga Rao. 'He seems a bright, intelligent lad; go now, and come again.'

My father, thus dismissed, made a respectful salaam and departed. I stood with folded arms in front of the master.

'Go and sit over there,' said he to me, 'and Samiah will give you a lesson.'

The Brahmin boy beside whom I sat down, making a smooth surface with the palm of his hand in some clean sand, wrote four letters with his finger, and caused me to say them after him. Then he showed me how to smooth the sand and form the letters for myself.

The other boys, of whom there were about thirty, were all this time shouting their lessons, almost 'as loud as they could bawl,' the teacher, in a sing-song voice, reading a sentence, and the boys shouting it after him.

This went on till they could say that sentence correctly and rapidly, when another sentence was treated in the same way.

In the midst of this hubbub, my attention was attracted to Samiah, who, sitting a little behind the

master, was amusing himself by thrusting a straw into the holes of the large black ants in the mud floor. When an ant seized hold of the straw he pulled it out, and with the knife attached to his style cut off its head, saying, 'I sacrifice thee, as a he-goat, to the goddess of learning.'

Runga Rao, suddenly turning round to look for his cane, caught Samiah in the very act of cutting off the head of one of the ants.

'You rascal! What is that you are about? Killing the ants in that wanton manner! Do you wish, in your next birth, to be an ant yourself, and have your own head cut off? For such a sin as that you may have to suffer in many future births. You may be born as a dog, and have to live on a dung-hill and eat offal, or as a donkey and carry the washerman's load and suffer his beatings. But I'll lessen your future sufferings by inflicting on you a slight punishment now. Stand up, keep your legs straight. Bend down and take hold of your big toes. Remain in that position till I tell you to rise.'

The poor boy, in a slow and sulky manner, did as he was told, and remained in that painful position till his back and legs ached.

The instruction we received in Runga Rao's school was as poor and unsatisfactory as it could well be. Nothing was ever explained to us. We repeated our lessons like parrots, all shouting at the same time. We learned to read nothing except what was thus, by constant repetition, fixed in our memory. If any one had asked us to tell the meaning or purport of what we read, we

should have looked at him with astonishment. It never occurred to us to think or inquire what the meaning was.

Once, during the visit of my cousin Balambal and her mother, with whom I stayed in Coimbatore when I lost my gold bracelet, I overheard my father telling how well I could read. I joined the group, and Balambal, who was younger than I, took one of my books and put it into my hand. Proud of what I considered my ability, I read a little.

'That is wrong,' said Balambal; 'you made a mistake.' She had been reading for some time in the mission girls' school in Coimbatore.

Annoyed and angry at being corrected by a girl, I said, 'What I have read is quite right.'

'No, it is not,' she replied; 'give the book to me, and I will read it.'

She took the book, pointed out the mistake, and read the passage fluently and correctly. I had nothing to say except, 'That's how the teacher told me to read it.'

My father and his sister swayed backwards and forwards, roaring with laughter.

Runga Rao was irregular in his attendance, and careless in his work. When we failed to repeat our lessons, he would get into a furious rage, and beat us unmercifully. He would make us rise up from the floor and sit down again a great many times, or cause us to hang by the hands from a beam across the roof. Sometimes he would make two boys, who both deserved punishment, beat each other on the head till he told them to stop.

In order to learn well and escape these inflictions, two

of my companions and I made *pujah* (worship) one day to the goddess of learning. Having bought in the bazaar rice cakes, plantain fruits, betel nuts, camphor, incense powder, garlands, and other things necessary for the ceremony, we took them into one of the rooms in the court of the temple, where we thought we should not be disturbed, and placed them before a little idol that one of us had.

We dressed the god in a silk cloth, and adorned it in the usual way with garlands. Samiah, whom being a Brahmin we made our priest, set fire to the camphor, and threw some incense powder on some live coal heaped on a plate. While the camphor was blazing, and the smoke of the incense was ascending, we fell down before the god.

It is usual after worship to distribute sacred ashes and sandal wood paste, and some betel leaf and betel nuts, to the people after the idol has been taken out—carried in procession round the temple and put in its place again. Fearing, however, that we might be disturbed by some of the temple Brahmins, and that our betel nuts and other things would be taken from us, we distributed them at once to the people who were standing round and worshipping with us. Our boy priest, with much dignity, gave to each a little cow dung ashes, which we smeared across our brow; then, with a spoon he gave each of us a small quantity of sandal wood paste, which, with the point of one of our fingers, we put as a round dot in the middle of our forehead. He gave every one a few green betel leaves and some nuts. When all this was finished, and

we were about to bring out the idol for the procession, the chief priest of the temple, a very choleric old Brahmin, came scolding and threatening. We immediately shut and barred the door of the little room.

'Fools and rascals!' he cried in a rage. 'Who allowed you to take the sacred vessels and the temple bell, and use them in this way?'

We were all trembling with fear, and none of us dared to say anything to him.

'Don't abuse the boys,' said one of the men outside. 'They are doing no harm. This is a good beginning for them; they should rather be encouraged than blamed.'

The old priest paid no heed to these appeals, but kept shoving and beating the door, and trying to compel us to come out. Being old and feeble, he soon became tired, and went away.

'You can come out now, the old Brahmin is away; no one will disturb you,' said the people outside, who were friendly to us.

Hastily bringing the idol out, we tied it to a small car that we had made for the purpose, and carried it shoulder high round the temple.

Happily, such useless village schools as Runga Rao's are gradually being improved. In many large towns normal training schools for teachers have been established, and young teachers are encouraged by the offer of liberal grants to leave their schools in charge of some relative, while they go and learn the method of teaching.

Inspectors visit the village schools at regular intervals,

and give a grant of money to the teachers in proportion to the proficiency of the children.

By this means great improvement is taking place in the old village schools, and although the high ideal of education, 'that each youth should grow up in enviable freedom, surrounded with beautiful and noble objects, in constant intercourse with worthy men, taught what he needs first to know, and never learning anything which he requires to unlearn,'—although this ideal may have to wait long before it is realised, an approach to it is being made: the children are being taught to look at objects around them, to compare and to describe, to understand and reflect, and there is now some endeavour to train the reason, the imagination, and the affections, as well as the memory.

CHAPTER IV.

CHOLERA.

ONE morning, a little girl, thrusting her head into the school-shed with a look and voice of terror, shouted, 'Cholera is in the village. Beeran's aunt has taken it and died.'

We all jumped up, and gathering our books together, ran out of the school and off to our homes.

Except famine, cholera is the most terrible scourge of India, and in some respects is even more awful than famine itself. Famine destroys chiefly the poor; its approach can be observed and, to some extent, guarded against; but cholera is a demon that walks in silence and darkness, and that spares no rank or age. Its doomed victims, although dreading, are unconscious of, its approach, till it lays its hand on them and strikes them down.

The rumour that cholera was in Madras, in Salem, in Coimbatore, had reached us, and filled us with vague fear. But a week before the cholera god had been carried in procession through the village, and as we had been liberal in our offerings, both to the god and to the priests who accompanied it, and had been unceasing in

prayers and vows in the temple, we hoped that the plague would leave us unvisited, and now, hardly more than a week after the god had been so earnestly invoked, the enemy had come and commenced its work of destruction!

There were not wanting some who declared that instead of warding off the disease, the visit of the god was its direct and immediate cause.

Certain it is that only those who drank the water of the well where the priests who accompanied the cholera god bathed and washed their clothes fell victims to the disease. The pariahs and other outcasts who were forbidden to approach this caste well all escaped.

Every morning I used to go to the temple to pray that both I and my father and mother might be preserved from the disease.

One morning I heard an old neighbour woman singing a song which attracted my attention. It declared that God is not made of stone, or brass, or mud; that the worship of such false gods is useless; that God is a spirit, and dwells only in the heart of His true worshippers.

'What is that song you are singing?' I asked.

'It is a song that my husband used to sing,' she replied. 'I often sing it at my work in the morning. Would you like to hear it?'

I told her that I should, and she sang:—

My God is not a chiselled stone,
Or lime so bright and white:
Nor is He cleaned with tamarind,
Like images of bronze.

I cannot worship such as these,
  But loudly make my boast,
That in my heart I place the feet,
  The golden feet of God.

If He be mine, what can I need?
  My God is everywhere:
Within, beyond man's highest word,
  My God existeth still.

In sacred books, in darkest night,
  In deepest, bluest sky,
In those who know the truth, and in
  The faithful few on earth:

My God is found in all of these;
  But can the Deity
Descend to images of stone,
  Or copper dark and red?

Alas! how long did I adore
  The chiselled stone, and serve
An image made of lime or brass,
  That's cleaned with tamarind.[1]

'Is it true what the song says,' I asked, 'that God does not dwell in an image of stone or brass?'

'Quite true,' she replied.

'Then why do men worship the stone, and say that the god is in it?'

'It is only for the sake of vulgar, ignorant, foolish people that the stone is worshipped. Sensible folk know that all this is vain.'

'But you worship the god, too, don't you?'

'Yes,' she replied; 'I must do what is customary. We must walk as the village walks.'

I went to the temple slowly and thoughtfully, and

[1] Gover's *Folk Songs of Southern India*.

gazed on the black oily idol in its shrine with thoughts and feelings that I had never had before. I was not convinced that the object which I had been taught so devoutly to reverence and address my prayers to, whose curse I had been accustomed to dread, and whose malignant power I had heard so frequently invoked to work injury on others, that this black, weird, strange object was nothing but a dead, helpless stone!

The seed of doubt, however, was sown, and my faith in the gods was never again so strong and unhesitating as it had been before.

In a week the disease spread through the whole village, and for a month it raged with fearful violence. As many as ten, and sometimes twenty people were attacked in one day; and at first almost every one who took the disease died.

At half-past three one morning one of my young brothers was attacked. He was immediately taken to another room away from us, and we were sent off in the dusk of early morning to the house of an aunt.

My brother died at four in the afternoon. His death was kept a close secret from us; but we suspected what had happened by seeing the preparations for worship, and for the sacred rice boiling, that, with the view of soothing the anger of the god, always takes place where a cholera victim has died.

While cholera is prevalent the people go very early to bed, and do not leave their houses till the sun is well up. They very rarely go out in the night.

A hundred goats were sacrificed; but this seemed rather to provoke the god, for the number of his victims,

for a little while after, increased. At length the cases became fewer, the violence of the malady abated, and most of those who were stricken down recovered.

It was at this stage that I was attacked. I became sick in the middle of the night; but I hesitated for a long time to awake any one and ask assistance. The pain became so great, however, that I could endure it no longer; so, creeping to where my aunt's husband was lying on the ground asleep, with his sheet closely covering him from head to foot, I shook him, and shouted at the same time, 'Uncle, uncle, I am very ill; I must go out.' My uncle dashed the cloth off his face, and, jumping up, carried me out; then returning with me, he kept me near the fire, and warmed my body and my head. I soon became unconscious, and my parents were sent for to take me home.

I recovered consciousness when I was taken in my father's arms into the open air. Loudly bewailing, he and my mother took me first into the temple, where with streaming eyes my mother prayed for my recovery, and vowed that if her petition were granted she would give a beautiful white heifer and a ram to be sacrificed every year for three years on the last day of the annual festivals, and that I would roll on the ground round the temple at one of the car feasts. Some pills that a missionary in Coimbatore had distributed were brought to our village, but most of the people, fearing the rage of the goddess, refused to use them. My father, however, being a man of greater courage than most of the others, and also partly in revenge on the goddess for the death of my younger brother, and partly in des-

peration, obtained some of the pills and gave them to me.

One night during my illness I dreamed that two short and shaggy-haired old black women, stooping with age, stood on the two west corners of the house, and called out, 'Oh women, come, come.' I awoke in terror, and told the dream to my mother, who soothed me and hushed me to sleep again.

About an hour after my grandmother and my mother were both attacked, and fell victims before three in the morning.

Thus, in a fortnight we lost seven in our house, and as many as forty among our relatives.

A few days after my recovery Runga Rao came to condole with my father on his losses, and to congratulate him on my restoration.

'I am glad that your eldest son was spared to you,' he said. 'His loss would have been harder for you to bear than all the rest. Did you give him any of the white people's medicine?'

'Yes,' said my father, 'I gave him a pill. His mother tried to dissuade me, but I thought I might try at least with one child. It did him good; so I gave him a good many afterwards.'

'It was a great risk,' said the schoolmaster, shaking his head. 'Many who refused to take the medicine recovered, and I hear that some who took it died by incurring the wrath of the goddess.'

'It was not so in my family,' replied my father. 'My wife and my mother, who were obstinate in refusing the pills, died very quickly after they were attacked. I

wish in my heart to curse the goddess for what she has done, notwithstanding all the vows, and prayers, and worship we offered to her.'

'Don't say that,' said the Brahmin. 'I know many who were cured by her. The cholera only disappeared, too, after special worship was paid to her, and she was soothed by being bathed with cocoanut water, milk, curd, the juice of the best oranges, pomegranates, lemons, jack-fruit, plantains, and mangoes. She is very faithful to her devotees. I am sorry, though, that you lost your wife. It will cost you something to get another.'

'Yes,' said my father, 'my wife's death is a loss of a thousand rupees to me. I have my son also to provide with a wife. These expenses will be very hard on me.'

'Oh,' said the schoolmaster, rising to go, 'a rich man like you can easily bear them.'

There lived in the village a religious mendicant who had a vow of silence. Beggars are a very numerous class in India. Some adopt the profession from simple laziness, and in order to obtain a livelihood; and as the bestowal of alms is regarded by every one as the most sacred and meritorious of acts, every beggar may be said to be in easy, if not comfortable, circumstances. Almost all mendicants are religious devotees. Either from a disgust to life caused by bereavement, personal sickness, the loss of wealth, or other disappointment, or from a pure desire to propitiate the gods and obtain deliverance from future punishment, or from a mixture of motives, they take a vow of poverty, and forsaking relatives and friends, denying themselves almost everything that other men

A HINDU BEGGAR.

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prize—they allow their hair to grow long and matted, smear their body with ashes, and, clad in the meagrest garment, they wander from village to village, from fair to fair, from festival to festival, and lodge in the open verandahs and in the public choultries. Some, in addition to the privations of a begging and wandering life, afflict themselves in various ways—walk on wooden shoes covered closely with iron nails, or wear a heavy iron frame riveted round their neck. The people, while regarding them as unmitigated rascals, capable of any crime, yet almost worship them as beings of extraordinary religious merit. To be distrusted and despised as a man and worshipped and ministered to as a god does not appear an inconsistency to the Hindu mind. These beggars, being so highly and universally honoured, are very proud and vain.

The devotee who had taken up his abode in our village had a vow of silence. He lived in a corner of a verandah in one of the side streets amid a heap of rags that had accumulated round him in the course of years. He sat for hours and hours in a vacant, listless manner in the midst of his rags. He went occasionally to the village shop to buy food with the money that the people gave to him. He had no friend or relative in the village. No one knew who he was or where he had come from. He had lived in the same monotonous manner, I was told, for twenty years. Differently from most beggars, he covered his almost naked body with a long cloak.

The excitement and anxiety of the cholera made no change in his quiet, listless manner and monotonous habits till one day he seemed to have suddenly gone mad. He was seen prancing wildly, and followed by a

crowd of excited, alarmed people, running to the village burning-place. There, amid the half-consumed skulls and bones of the dead bodies that had so recently been burned, he jumped about and waved his hands in a frantic manner, shouting, 'Ah! Ah! Hoo! Hoo!' Every one believed that he was possessed by Mari, the goddess of cholera.

'O goddess!' cried my uncle Boyan, falling down before him. 'Our kind mother! What is our crime? What disrespect have we shown to you? Why do you thus roar with grief? Tell us our offences, and we will worship thee, and make atonement.'

'Ah! Ah! Hoo! Hoo! No proper worship has been made to me!' cried the man possessed, in a strange, unnatural voice, and in a sing-song recitative manner. 'No anointing. My temple is in ruins: I am exposed to the sun and the rain. I can endure this no longer. I have been preserving you hitherto. Even now, when I saw seven bands of demons coming to spread destruction among you, I took compassion, and allowed only three of the bands to enter the village. Two of them have gone among cattle and sheep, and the third among men. Ah! Ah! Hoo! Hoo!' On hearing these terrible words, we were all greatly distressed.

'O goddess! Our gentle mother, take pity on us poor creatures!' cried my uncle. 'We will execute your royal commands.'

Suddenly the inspiration left the man, and he became silent and listless, and passed quietly through the crowd, which, in an awe-stricken manner, made way for him.

Arrangements for the repair of Mari's the goddess of

cholera's temple, were immediately commenced. Some promised wood, others lime, others tiles, and others workmen's wages, and all went home full of fear, and of zeal for the goddess.

The work was speedily commenced, money and building materials were freely contributed, and many, who were strong and who knew the work, assisted gratuitously in repairing the temple. The work was finished just about the time that the disease completely left the village.

CHAPTER V.

WE GO ON PILGRIMAGE.

My hair had never been cut. It was kept neatly smoothed and oiled, parted in the middle, and plaited at the back of my head.

It is not usual for boys to wear their hair long. Shaving is practised even on little children—only a tuft at the back of the head being allowed to grow. My mother, however, had vowed, while I was yet an infant, that if my life were spared, my hair should be allowed to grow till I was eight years old, when at the gate of the famous temple of Peroor it should be solemnly shaven off, and presented to the god.

The time had now come for the fulfilment of the vow, and great was the talk and interest which the anticipated pilgrimage excited in our family and among all our relatives and friends in the village.

Veeran, a young farmer, who lived close to us, and his wife, Meenatchy, whom he had recently taken home as his wife, and who, it was said, was a good deal persecuted by her mother-in-law, asked to be allowed to join us. Several others, thinking that it would be a good opportunity to take their wives and children safely to

A BULLOCK CART.

the great temple to present their offerings and see the god, made the same request. Feeling that the larger the party the less would be our danger of being attacked by robbers, we welcomed all who offered to join us.

The astrologer having fixed the most auspicious time to start, all needful preparations were made; cooking pots, brass drinking vessels, sweet cakes fried in ghee, cooked rice tied in handkerchiefs, and a quantity of raw rice to be boiled on the way, were collected ready to be put in the bullock carts along with us in the morning.

The night before we started I could hardly sleep for thinking of the great event, and next morning I could eat nothing. Amid much noise and shouting—every one telling every one else what to do, all in gay clothing, the women with their skin tinged yellow with saffron and their eyelids blackened to give a more voluptuous and languishing look to their eyes—we, at length, got ourselves comfortably seated in the straw in the bottom of the bullock carts.

The bullocks, making the old village ring with the sound of the bells round their necks, started off, and our journey commenced.

In the first cart, along with my father and myself, were my aunt, Meenatchy, and Balambal. Alas! my poor mother, who had made the vow, and who had looked forward so eagerly to this journey, was no more. Where was she? We knew not; but why think of these things?

We soon reached the highway leading to Pollachy, whither, that being market day, large numbers of people were hastening. The road was alive with heavily-laden

bullock carts, droves of sheep and goats, women with baskets, leather workers with dried or tanned buffalo hides on their heads, men leading a goat or two or a couple of calves, and many hastening with empty baskets to buy in their week's provisions, each woman walking a pace or two behind her husband, both talking aloud to each other as they went, without seeing each other's face.

'What a large number of people there are on the road,' I said. 'Are they all going to Peroor?'

At this, all in the cart burst out laughing.

'See how pious he is,' said my aunt. 'He is thinking only of the temple and of the god.'

'This is market day at Pollachy,' said my father. 'The people are going there.'

'It is still four miles from Pollachy,' said my aunt. 'Some of these people must have a long way to go to get their week's provisions and to sell their produce.'

'Some come as far as eight or ten miles,' replied my father.

'Why do they come so far? Have they no markets near their own villages?' Meenatchy asked.

'Not like the Pollachy market,' said my father. 'If they wish to buy bullocks or a cow, or bamboos and timber to build a house, or a rich cloth for a bride, they must come to this market.'

Suddenly we heard a great rustling over our head among the leafy branches of the large trees that lined the road. Looking out, Balambal raised her arms in an animated, excited manner, and shouted, 'The monkeys, the monkeys! See, see!'

We all looked out, and saw a number of monkeys leaping from branch to branch, sitting up in their curious comical way gazing at us, and then springing to another branch.

'Some have young ones in their arms,' I shouted. 'See how they are jumping and holding their little ones at the same time.'

'In many parts of India,' said my father, 'monkeys are worshipped as gods, and in Benares there is a temple where there are 500 of them.'

Thus conversing, we drew near to the town of Pollachy. The white terraced roofs of some of the houses, the pointed spire of the Government buildings, and the square conical tower of the temple, were now in view.

The market extended fully half a mile beyond the town, so that we had slowly to thread our way through the dense mass of buyers and sellers. We passed on our left the burial ground of the Christians, where a large cross marked the grave of a missionary's child.

Apart by themselves, in a low-lying field, were the despised outcast leather workers with their hides. On our right, in an open space among trees, were the cattle, so tame that bullocks, cows, bulls, sheep, goats, and one or two native ponies were mixed up with the black-skinned, white-clad crowds.

The air was laden with the odour of spices, and our eyes and nostrils began to tingle as we passed between the large heaps of red and green chillies. The press of bare-backed, bare-legged people was now so great—every one shouting, pushing, elbowing, bargaining—that

it was difficult to get along at all. Eheu! What a dust! How hot it is! What a teeming, gesticulating, jostling, vociferating multitude!

Although confusion and disorder seemed to reign everywhere, a more careful inspection showed this impression to be erroneous. Every kind of merchandise had its proper place in the market. The cloths and blankets were spread out under long open sheds that extended along the two further sides of the wide open spaces. The booths were arranged in orderly lines; the bullock carts were drawn up side by side on the outskirts farthest from the sheds; and all the women and others, with their baskets of wares, sat in lines in the middle of this camp-like enclosure.

Here, everything produced by every family in the whole country round, and many things from the ends of the earth, were spread out under the open sky; grains, spices, fruits, vegetables, jewels of gold, of silver, of brass, of iron, and of sea shell; cloths and blankets, strange wooden combs, looking-glasses, paint for the face, sea-shell feeding bottles, Bryant and May's matches, Eno's fruit salt, and every other requisite of Hindu village life.

'Yesterday,' said my father, 'how few of all these thousands of people were here, and to-morrow they will all have gone. How strange! Is it not a picture of life? We come into the world, spend our little day, chaffering, elbowing, pushing our way along as best we can, and then we suddenly depart!'

'See,' said my aunt, who was paying but little heed to these moralisings, 'see these impudent beggars how

they snatch and take by force what they want from the baskets of the poor women.'

We looked out and saw an ugly, dirty, half-naked beggar, his face, breast, and arms smeared with ashes; his long hair all matted and tied in a knot above his head; his wallets slung on his shoulder, and an oval vessel made of half a gourd in his hand, taking some fruit, vegetables, and grain from the baskets of the women. Most of his victims struggled with him, seized his hand, or thrust him aside, trying to prevent him taking too much, but no one hindered him altogether from getting something.

Poor people! It is not so much the taxes they have to pay to Government that crush and impoverish them, as the exactions of these impudent mendicants, and of the idle temple Brahmins, bribes to policemen and village officials, and the exorbitant interest of the money-lenders.

Having now reached the end of the market, we passed the large hospital on our right, then on our left the Government buildings, with their pointed spires and long Gothic windows, also a small mosque, and a Hindu temple that was being built.

The town was now behind us, and we were going leisurely along a beautiful broad smooth road, shaded on either side by large wide-spreading trees.

'What a curious-looking house that is!' said I, pointing to an oblong tiled building on the top of a rising ground, a little distance from the road.

'Who can it be that lives there, away from the town and from every one else?' said Meenatchy.

'That,' said my father, 'is the house of the European in charge of this district.'

'Does he live all alone there?' Meenatchy asked.

'Yes; he is not married, and there is no other European in the town.'

'Not married!' exclaimed Meenatchy. 'How could his parents allow him to grow up without getting a wife for him?'

'Many of the English gentlemen are like this. Their customs are altogether different from ours They don't marry till they are old, and then every one selects a wife for himself.'

'Most wonderful!' exclaimed my aunt. 'I have heard that the English are very curious people, but I never thought they could be like this. Have they no shame? How can a man speak for a wife for himself?'

'In everything they are different from us,' said my father. 'European ladies drive openly in the same carriage with their husbands; they walk about arm-in-arm with them; they ride on horseback with them, and they even sit in their presence!'

'Our customs are very much better than that,' said my aunt.

'Do they all live alone like this? It is strange that they are not afraid,' said Meenatchy.

'In many places they are alone among the Hindus, but in large towns there are many. They live in beautiful houses in large gardens,' replied my father.

'How can they live without being married?' said Meenatchy. 'Every Hindu has a wife.'

'They are a strange people,' said my father, 'but they

are very brave and very honest. They never take bribes, and they try to do as much good to the people as they can. They are far kinder to us than the Brahmins or the Mohammedans. If the Europeans were only more numerous, the village officials and others would not be allowed to oppress us as they do.'

It was now about four o'clock in the afternoon, and as we slowly jogged along we passed many of the people returning to their villages from the market. One man took hold of the back of our cart to help him along. My father entered into conversation with him, and asked many questions regarding his business at the market, and other private matters. I have observed that there is a great difference between Hindus and Europeans in this respect. An Englishman is offended if you ask him where he is going, where he has come from, his object in coming, his profession, the amount of his salary, and the like; whereas a Hindu regards such inquiries as an indication of polite and kindly interest in him. He will answer freely, though not always truthfully, all your queries, and will, by magnifying his salary and in other ways, seek to give you a high opinion of his importance.

The sun had set before we reached the choultry by the wayside where we were to pass the night. It looked, with its high blank walls, almost like a fortified place.

In front was a verandah and a room for Europeans. The rest of the building was reserved for Hindus, and was arranged, native fashion, with the roof sloping

towards the centre, where, without the aid of windows, abundance of air and light was admitted.

This strong, commodious building for travellers had been erected, as a work of merit, by a rich Hindu.

Choultries like this are the inns of India. They are to be found in every town and village, and, in the Coimbatore district, at intervals of ten or twelve miles along the main roads.

Frequently they consist simply of a strong square room, with three walls, without doors or windows, the roof being supported in front by two wooden pillars. Sometimes they are spacious buildings, with inner verandahs and rooms, with one side set apart for Brahmins, and, occasionally, a room for Europeans.

When we entered the choultry a lively and animated scene presented itself.

A large party of pilgrims, on their way to the sacred town of Pulney, filled every corner of the building. They wore the pilgrim dress of brick-coloured cotton cloth. Men, women, children, all were clad in the same ugly colour. Some had a band of the dingy yellow cloth tied over the mouth. The light, arched wooden frames, adorned with the cloth of tawny hue, with peacocks' feathers, and carved representations of some god, which they carry on their shoulder, and to which are tied the earthen pots containing the sugar, butter, fish, milk, and other things for the idol, were laid here and there on the ground.

Some of the pilgrims were bringing water from the well; others were washing their feet; some were cooking over small fires; others were lying at full length on

the floor; and some were comforting the children. Almost all, except those with the cloth over their mouths, were talking in loud tones, and making a terrible noise.

'Ramaswamey,' said one, 'is this milk kavady (offering)? It is big. Do you feel it heavy?'

'By the help of the spear god, it is as light as a garland of flowers,' Ramaswamey replied.

'Whose temple was that which we passed on the way?' inquired one woman of another.

'It was Mariumman's temple.'

'Oh, goddess Mari!' exclaimed the woman, 'take care of us on our way. If we return in health, we will give you two goats and two pots of boiled rice.'

'Oh, Mariumman!' cried another, 'you must give strength to our hands and feet. Let a stone fall on the head of that man who did evil to me last year.'

'This Mariumman is a good goddess,' said another; 'she will give all that we ask. But Karuvaloor Mariamma is a bad goddess; she will not do what we ask. I went to her for the gift of a child; I gave her two pots of rice, but without success. May her temple fall down and go to ruins! Good-for-nothing goddess! May she find destruction! I will throw up two handfuls of earth.'

'Sellaka, don't blaspheme the goddess,' said one of the women, who was lying on the floor, with her eyes shut, as if asleep.

'What sort of goddess is she, if she cannot do what we ask?' exclaimed Sellaka. 'Let her go to ruin.'

'What do we do when we reach Pulney?' asked a young man of another, who, from his self-conscious,

bustling, important air, seemed to have made the pilgrimage before.

'First, every one must go to the barber, and get the whole head shaved.'

'Must we be shaved too?' said Sellaka.

'Yes, every one, women as well as men.'

'I wish I had not to get my head shaved,' said Sellaka; 'but no matter, for the favour and blessing of the god, I will do it.'

'Then we must go to the bazaar and buy plantains, cocoanut, camphor, and benzamin, and take them to the temple. The priest will keep half, and give us back the remainder, with a little white ashes.'

'What becomes of the milk and the dead fish that we take?' asked one.

'When the pot of milk and the vessel with the fish are put before the god, the milk suddenly bubbles up, and the fish become alive.'

'A wonderful miracle!' exclaimed one of the men. 'Pulneyandy is a great god.'

'All this is doubtful,' said a man, looking round from the rice which he was cooking over a small fire on the ground.

'How doubtful?' exclaimed the other.

'I have been told that the priest throws some lime into the milk to make it ferment and bubble up.'

'Well, let that pass. What about the fish? How is it that they come alive?'

'Oh, that is very easily done. The priest takes the pot with the fish into the inner shrine, where no one can see him, quickly throws out the dead fish, and puts in

some living ones in their stead; then, covering up the pot, he brings it out and gives it back to the worshippers.'

'I can believe anything of these Brahmin rascals. They are up to all kinds of tricks,' said the other. 'However, let that go. May the god lead us as he wishes.'

While this was going on, and while I was listening to the talk of these people, the women of our party had taken out the rice and other things from the cart, drawn water from the well, lit a fire, and were busily cooking our evening meal. A little distance off, in one of the side rooms, reclining on a mat, with his shoulder supported by a large round pillow, was a man of a very different style from the pilgrim rabble who were making such a din, and who had first attracted my attention.

His turban, which was lying by his side, was of rich purple silk, with a bright border of gold thread. A square scarlet cashmere cloth, embroidered at the corners and in the centre with gold, was thrown loosely over his naked shoulders. He was evidently a gentleman of some wealth and importance.

Presently he graciously motioned my father and myself to approach him. He kindly asked about our affairs, and the purpose of our journey.

'And is this the boy whose hair you are going to give to the god?' said he, looking at me with a smile.

Afterwards, when we learned who he was, we were astonished at his affability. It is not usual for Hindus of any official importance to converse or hold kindly intercourse with those whom they think beneath them. A Tasildar, or other native magistrate, will walk with one or two servants round him, his head high, his toes

out, and his body swaying from side to side. His inferiors must approach him humbly, and must patiently endure his lofty manners. English officials, although with ten times more authority, are not half so proud. The Hindu cringes to those above him, and is haughty to those beneath him; the Englishman, I have observed, shows most of his pride to his superiors, and to those who resist his authority.

The stranger told us that he was in the service of the Rajah of Travancore, and had been to England more than once on the rajah's business.

We gazed with wonder on a man who had crossed the great ocean, and had visited distant countries. His broad, massive, softly-moulded, good-humoured face inspired our confidence, and set us at our ease in his presence. He seemed a man of more than ordinary refinement and intelligence.

'Were the people kind to you in England?' inquired my father. 'I should be afraid to go to a country where there were none of my relatives, or of my caste people, and where the customs must all be strange.'

'The English were very kind to me. They made a "lion" of me, as it is called, *i.e.*, they treated me as if I were a very great man. Rich people invited me to their houses, and showed me much honour.'

'Are all the people in England rich?'

'No,' replied the stranger, 'many are poor; but almost all have more money and other possessions than the majority of Hindus have. Here, how many possess only one cloth to cover them, a small hut to live in, and for furniture only an earthen pot or two, a small earthen lamp, and a grass mat?'

'Why do so many of the English come to India?'

'Because they find that they can have more money, and honour, and power in this country than in their own.'

'The English are a wonderful people!' exclaimed my father. 'They may not be so contented as the Hindus, but perhaps that is why they are so enterprising, so rich, and so powerful. If the Hindus were like them, they, too, might be rich; but they are too timid. Those who have money are afraid to risk it in any enterprise; they do nothing but follow old customs.'

'The only people that prosper among us,' said the stranger, 'are the lawyers, the money-lenders, and Government, Hindu, and Mohammedan officials, who fatten on the vices of the people, or enrich themselves by bribes and other exactions.'

By this time our food was ready; so, requesting permission from the stranger to leave him, we sat down in front of our leaf plates, and soon after, as it was late, and we were tired with our journey, we composed ourselves to sleep, the women lying down a little distance off in a place by themselves. The pilgrims were now quiet, and were lying in various positions, like fish shaken out of a basket.

Early next morning we scrambled into our carts again, and continued our journey. The rich, cultivated fields, through which we had been passing, were suddenly exchanged for a barren desert. The roadside trees were stunted and scraggy, and in the wide landscape, which spread for miles before us, hardly a village was to be

seen. In the undulating stony waste, on which our road lay before us like a long white tape on reddish grey cloth, herds of sheep were wandering and nibbling the scanty grass.

The lovely belts of green on the lower slopes of a range of rocky, precipitous mountains in the far distance gave rest and refreshment to the eye.

After jogging along about eight miles, we passed on the left a huge black image of the belly god, the largest I had ever seen.

Three miles farther on our way led us through a small village, with straggling mud houses, a noisy school-shed, lazy loungers, and a small open shop, where, behind baskets of grains and spices, and bunches of plantains and cocoanuts suspended from the low, projecting roof, a woman sat, waiting for custom.

Again, as by magic, the scene changed. A turn in the road brought us as into a new world. We were moving along the top of the bund, or embankment, of a vast artificial lake, whose surface a stiff breeze was lashing into foam-crested waves, and which seemed to stretch to the very foot of the mountains in the far distance.

In front, at the end of the bund, we looked with delight on the rich green masses of waving palms and other trees, and below, to our right, on the bright fields of growing rice that lay spread out for miles, vieing in beauty and magnificence with the lake above, to which they owed all their fertility.

'Were we to come along this road in the hot weather,' said my father, 'we should find this large tank quite

empty, and its rich bed covered with cucumbers and melons.'

'Where does all the water go?' I asked.

'It is allowed to flow gradually over the paddy fields,' replied my father. 'See, the buffaloes ploughing in the wet mud, and yonder, in another patch, the young shoots of paddy that have just been planted: the water is being let in to soak them well.'

Soon the tank was behind us, and we were enjoying the shade and coolness of a magnificent grove of banyan trees. Out into the glaring sunshine again, past a field of tall sugar-cane, and a squeaking, squealing sugar press; then along the lower side of the bund of another tank, we entered the town of Coimbatore. What beautiful broad, straight streets! How magnificent some of the houses! We passed the college, the hospital, the London Mission school, and one or two temples, half hidden and smothered by small dirty shops.

We went to my uncle's house, where we spent the night. Continuing our journey next morning, we were soon beyond the town, under leafy trees again, in a rich, tank-watered country, and, without accident or incident of importance, we at length arrived at the village of Peroor.

It is a small, straggling place, with wide, open spaces, and a sleepy, decayed appearance. The large, massive towers of the temple; the high, graceful granite pillar in front of its main entrance; the beautiful tank, with its flights of granite steps; the large car, with its carvings, reposing under its protecting thatch; the many choultries for the accommodation of pilgrims, were the chief, and

indeed the only striking objects in the village. The whole place had a vacant, deserted look; but one could imagine how busy and animated it would appear on grand festival occasions, with crowds of pilgrims from far and near, bringing their offerings, bathing, chattering, and cooking.

'I shall go and find a barber to cut off the boy's hair,' said my father, the morning after our arrival. 'I must

A HINDU BARBER.

also make a bargain with the priests about the ceremonies, and engage some musicians and dancing women to lead our procession.'

'Get a good man to shave the boy's head,' said my aunt.

'Yes,' said Meenatchy, stroking my hair affectionately,

'I am told that the barbers here are mostly rogues. They don't cast the hair into a holy river, but sell it to make wigs. I fear, my pet, that is what they will do with your smooth, lovely hair.'

'What if he does?' said my father. 'If it is cut off and given to the barber, and the fit ceremonies are performed, we need not care what becomes of it afterwards. At any rate, the barbers here won't play us the trick they do at Rameswaram.'

'What is that?' inquired my aunt.

'At the feasts there, when the multitudes of pilgrims are very great, and every one keeps pestering the few barbers to shave his head soon, the barbers shave a little off one side of each man's head, and leave them all standing in this ridiculous fashion till the business can be conveniently finished.'

'The barbers thus secure their time and their customers by one stroke, I suppose,' said my aunt.

'Yes,' replied my father. 'No other barber will touch a head that is half shaved, and the man cannot stir from the spot till the whole is completed.'

The barber is an important personage, because almost every Hindu has most of his head and face, and in some cases the back of his hands, regularly shaved, and because no Hindu will shave himself.

Although so essential to the comfort and dignity of the people, the barber is not esteemed in proportion to his usefulness. He is ranked with scavengers of all kinds, as a clearer away of dirt.

A tuft of hair at the back of the head, and a moustache, are all that is worn; the moustache is for ornament,

and the *kudami*, as the tuft is called, is for important religious purposes. It is usually worn tied in a knot and thrust beneath the turban. As a sign of mourning, the turban is laid aside and the *kudami* allowed to hang loose down the back.

There is nothing that a Hindu covets so much as a son; not merely for the pleasure of rearing him, and perpetuating his own name and nature to future generations; not merely, either, that he may have some one to look to for support in old age; but that his soul may be refreshed in the other world. One of the names for son is Puthiran, which means, 'Deliverer from hell.'

The most sacred duty incumbent on every Hindu who has survived his father is to perform the rites on the anniversary of his death for the repose of his soul. It is in these rites that the great importance of the *kudami* is found. The son bathes in the tank, and squeezes the drops from his hair into the water, and thus cools the tongue of his father in the land of spirits.

We found the barber that we were seeking, sitting under a large tree by the side of the tank, preparing to shave an old man. The barber was telling, in his garrulous way, some remarkable events that had recently occurred in Coimbatore.

'You know Samiah?' he said, as he rubbed his brush on the soap that lay on the ground by his side.

'The teacher in the mission school?' inquired the old man.

'The very man,' said the barber, 'and a good, respectable man he is.' The old Brahmin's face and mouth were now covered with lather, so that the barber was

allowed to go on with his story without interruption. 'Well, Samiah's niece was possessed with a devil, and a man was brought from Malabar to drive it out. He agreed to do the business for ten rupees.

'After performing a number of ceremonies, and just before tying an amulet round the girl's left arm, he asked five rupees more.

'Samiah insisted on keeping him to his bargain; told him that he would not give him another rupee; that ten rupees was enough for all he was doing—quite enough to spend on a woman.

'The man got into a rage, and left the house, muttering some mysterious words, which were supposed to mean that he would do some mischief to the inmates.

'Next day the vessels in the house moved from place to place of their own accord. Big stones fell in the rooms in front of the people sitting there. No one could discover or imagine where they came from.

'For about a fortnight, while this annoyance lasted, the people in the house could hardly sleep for fear of the stones falling on their heads and killing them. Yet the strange thing is, that although the stones continued to fall, they never struck any one, but seemed simply intended to give annoyance.'

'I wonder the people could stay in the house at all,' said my father. 'Did they not all leave it?'

'What could they do?' said the barber; 'the house is their own, and it was impossible to get another at once, although they had tried. But I have not told you all. The pot of rice on the fire would remain steady so long as the cook's eyes were on it; but if she looked away, it

would fall over on to the floor. Sometimes the cooked rice was coloured red, and a cloth taken from a vessel of water would be, to the amazement and terror of the women, perfectly dry.'

By this time the shaving of the old man's head was finished, and the thin line of hair left on his upper lip was properly trimmed.

'I heard something of these strange occurrences,' said he, 'and I have been wishing to meet some one who could tell me more particularly about them. Was no examination made by others into the cause of these things?'

'Yes,' replied the barber; 'the deputy-collector, Mr. Rungachariar, went to the house to see for himself. A small brass vessel that had been missing for a long time, and had been given up as lost, came towards him with tremendous force, so that he had to dodge his head to escape the blow.'

'Are these disturbances going on still?' asked my father.

'No,' replied the barber, 'they only lasted about a fortnight. The district munsiff, a great friend of Samiah, sent to Palghaut for a Mussulman, who directed the people in the house to pick up all the stones and other things as they fell, and put them in a pot of water with some turmeric powder and lime, and to keep it always on the fire. They were to keep the pot boiling constantly for three days. On the fourth day the man came, and with a kind of magical wand in his right hand went round the house three times, pronouncing some mysterious words. From that day the annoyance entirely ceased.'

On our way back to the choultry, I asked my father it he had ever heard of such things before.

'Yes,' said he, 'they occur in many places. They are supposed to be the work of evil spirits. Not long ago a Roman Catholic family in Coimbatore suffered greatly. There is also a house in the Brahmins' street there that has been entirely abandoned. If any one attempts to live in it the demon appears to them every night in a dream, in the likeness of a widow, and orders them to quit on pain of death. It is a fact that many who lived in the house died suddenly. Sometimes these evil spirits enter into human beings also. Your aunt suffered two or three times in this way. A Mohammedan drove out the demon, but it came back again. At length he performed ceremonies for ten days, after which it left her and never returned.'

'What kind of spirit was it?'

'It was a male spirit. It is always a male spirit that possesses a female.'

'Did my aunt know that a spirit had taken possession of her?'

'No; the spirit only came at certain hours of the day, and at those times she was unconscious. She did not speak her own words, or do any of her accustomed acts. The demon that possessed her had lived formerly in the Telugu country, and spoke through her in that language.

'What did he say?'

'Not much. When the Mohammedan was exorcising it, it would cry a thousand times, "I am going, I am going, I am going, I am suffering." It told also how it had seized your aunt, and had entered into her body.

How she, having on a certain occasion gone alone to a tank, had stumbled over a stone, and how it had entered into her at that moment. I remember the circumstance very well. Your aunt had indeed been to that place.'

'What did the Mohammedan do to drive out the spirit?'

'Making your aunt sit in the middle of a figure which he had drawn with chalk on the floor, he beat her soundly with a cane. She felt no pain, nor did the cane leave any marks on her body.'

'This is very terrible. I hope no evil spirit will ever take possession of me,' I said.

'Meditate much on the god, and perform diligently his worship, and he will protect you,' replied my father.

CHAPTER VI.

A HOLY MENDICANT—A HINDU POPE—SACRED ASHES—THE TEMPLE AND ITS SERVICE.

WHEN we returned to the choultry, a beggar was standing at the door with a group of people round him. He had a tall, red, conical cap on his head, a brass plate with the image of the monkey god on his breast, and the sacred yellow cloth thrown over his shoulders. On his left arm were a number of wallets; in one hand he carried a long staff, and with the other he was beating a small brass gong attached to his wrist. Round his neck were strings of holy beads, and his face, arms, and chest were smeared with sacred ashes.

'Do you know,' said he to some of the people standing round, 'that the great guru is in the neighbouring town? He has not been in this district for thirty years.'

'We heard that he had come,' said one of the village fathers. 'I remember the last time the guru came. Let me see—yes, it must be nearly thirty years ago. This will be the son of the guru that came then. Did you see him?'

'I only got a glimpse as he passed. It is only the Brahmins, and those who can give him a rich present

that are allowed to come near him. The people are all falling down before him, and worshipping him, like a god. Every family in his sect must send him some money. I saw his elephants and camels, and his splendid palanquin. He is more glorious than a rajah.'

'What a blessing it must be to fall at his feet!' said one. 'Does he teach the people anything?'

'He does not speak much,' replied the mendicant. 'He pours into each of his disciples' hands a little holy water for them to drink. He fines all who have broken any of the rules of caste.'

'Do they all pay?' asked my father. 'If every one who breaks the caste rules were fined, no one would escape.'

'It is true,' said the mendicant. 'Few in these days keep caste properly. It is only those who act differently from the majority that are fined. A widow was accused before him of immoral conduct. She was condemned to pay a heavy fine, and till the fine should be paid she was to be excluded from caste. Her relatives were expelled along with her, and no one was to be allowed to have any dealings with them. I am not a great guru,' continued the mendicant, 'but here are some sacred white ashes which will destroy your sins, and reduce them to ashes.'

'What good can ashes rubbed on the body do to the soul?' said the old man whom we saw being shaved, and who now joined the group.

'You fool!' said the beggar. 'Are you ignorant of the Sacred Books? Have you never heard of the wicked man, how, when he was dying, and when the demons were waiting to carry him to hell, a dog,

terrified by the demons, jumped from the dung-heap, and running into the house sprang upon the bed, covering the dying man with ashes; and how, at once, the evil spirits flew away, and the good angels came and carried the man's soul to heaven?'

'Oh yes, I have heard the story; but no one now-a-days, believes these stories—they are all lies. However, give me some of the ashes. At least, they can't do any harm. Perhaps they have some efficacy—who can tell? and it is well to follow the custom.'

So saying, he dipped his finger in the white dust, and smeared it in horizontal lines on his brow.

Although the women standing round were not allowed to do the same, they looked on with interest and approval while the men were adorning themselves.

After the mendicant had gone away, and the crowd had dispersed, the old man sat down beside my father, and asked about our journey, and our purpose in visiting Peroor at that time.

'We have come to fulfil a vow which my wife made when this boy was born. Her first child died, and she wished to please the god and save this boy's life.'

'Ah yes,' said the old man, 'there would be little service done to the gods but for sickness, bereavement, and suffering. When we are well and happy, we think little about religion.'

'It is true,' said my father, 'most of the offerings and penances are in fulfilment of vows made in terror, and which the people are afraid afterwards to leave unperformed. We have little reason to love the gods. They are mostly evil, vindictive, jealous beings, who

delight to afflict us, and who envy us the smallest happiness.'

'You heard how that rascally beggar spoke to me. I saw him dead drunk last night. He is half intoxicated with bang now. He is one of the greatest knaves in the country.'

'These beggars are mostly rascals,' said my father. 'How are the Brahmins here?'

'I don't wish to speak of them. Every one knows that in holy places like this they are worse than anywhere else.'

'It is a fine temple. What a pity it has never been finished!'

'How is it that so much money was spent in temple building long ago, while now they are allowed almost to fall into ruins?'

'There are no rich rajahs now, to undertake such works,' said the old man. 'The revenues which the rajahs, three hundred years ago, had little use for except to build temples and palaces with, are now spent by a Christian government on roads, bridges, railways, colleges, schools, and hospitals, and in high salaries to European officials. The people, too, are losing their faith in the gods. When I was a boy all the people used to flock to the festivals. Now the most faithful worshippers are women and children and idle vagabonds. So few people came to the car feast last month that the car could not be dragged, and messengers had to be sent to all the villages round to compel the people to come. They don't contribute as they used to do, and all kinds of plans have to be adopted to make them pay.'

'At Pollachy last year,' said my father, 'the god was brought out of the Siva temple loaded with chains, and the people were told that the god's cruel creditors had chained it for debt. Some of the people laughed, but most were afraid that the god would be angry and send some calamity to the town unless the chains were removed, so they contributed a large sum.'

'Here, at one of the feasts,' said the old man, 'they rubbed the god with ointment, saying that grief and anxiety had made him sick. Of course, the offerings flowed in, and the god quickly recovered health.'

The old man said this solemnly, yet there was a twinkle in his eye, and a sarcastic, humorous tone in his voice as he said it.

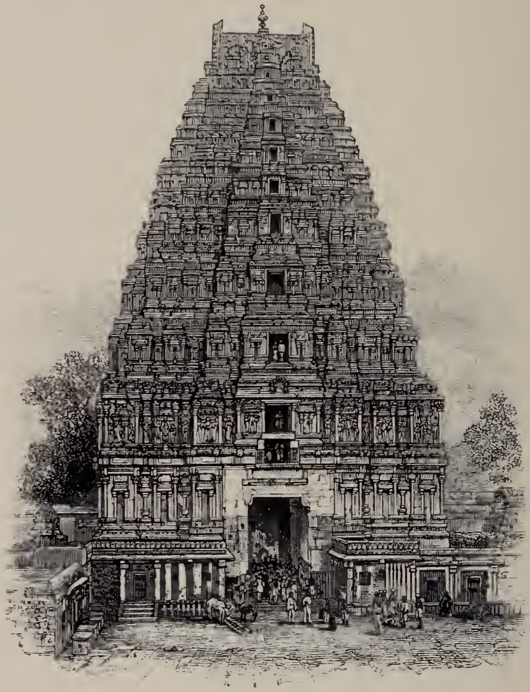
It was now time for us to go to the temple. The musicians and dancing-women were waiting outside, sounding their instruments, and talking in loud tones.

We went in procession,—my aunt, Meenatchy, and the other women of our party carrying the offerings, the musicians with their harsh, discordant music, and the dancing-women with rhythmical motions and sweet, plaintive singing, leading the way.

At the door of the temple my hair was soon shaven clean off, and given to the barber. We then passed through the massive doors under the high tower, into the temple court. In a recess in the gateway were wooden horses for the gods to ride on, and coils of thick rope to draw the unwieldy car with.

We crossed the court, making obeisance to the image of the sacred bull which reposed under a stone canopy not far from the gateway; we ascended the steps to the

temple, a square, flat-roofed structure—massive, gloomy, and austere, suggestive of caves and gloomy abysses, rather than of the gladness and brightness of free, open healthy nature, with its trees and flowers, the gladdening sunlight, and the open expanse of heaven.



TEMPLE AT PEROOR.

We passed between the rows of gods and griffins, beasts and devils carved in complete relief in the huge monolithic pillars that supported the roof, to the remote

interior where, behind a heavy iron grating, a small light was burning, and where *the* god was.

One of the priests opened the grating, went in, and poured over the god water, brought in a large copper vessel on the back of an elephant. He then anointed the idol with oil, put a dot of red and yellow powder on its forehead and shoulders, and placed garlands of flowers round its neck. He then came, received our offerings, and presented them to the god, all the while repeating verses of Sanscrit, and sounding a little bell.

We stood reverently waiting while the priest was making worship for us, but the Brahmins who were loitering about, and the village people who had entered along with us, showed no respect whatever for the place or the worship. They talked and laughed, and moved about as freely as if they had been at a fair.

Hindus perform their worship with as much talking and confusion as they do everything else. It is not unusual even for quarrels and fights to take place in the temple courts, and in the very presence of the god.

The officiating priest at length came out and gave us some of the fruits, rice, and flowers that we had given to him to be put before the idol, and poured some of the holy water into our hands. We drank a little of the water, fixed the flowers in our hair, or in the folds of our turbans, and returned to the choultry.

One morning, shortly after our return from Peroor, a European gentleman rode into our village.

'That,' said a boy called Rungan, one of my companions, who, about a year before, had gone to school at Coimbatore, and who was home on a holiday, 'that

is the missionary, Mr. Knox. He will be going to preach.'

Mr. Knox was accompanied by a horsekeeper and two native evangelists. He rode a white pony, and dismounting walked with a firm and measured step towards the stone platform with the gods, near the tank. His short beard and moustache were black, and his pale face had a slightly olive tinge. His whole manner, all the lines of his face, as well as the calm and somewhat stern look in his eyes, indicated force and determination, rather than gentleness and amiability. He wore a short tweed jacket, a grey holland vest, and white trousers ; a large grey helmet covered his head, and added to the sternness of his aspect. The native preachers who were with him were dressed like Brahmin clerks. One wore a white, the other a red turban with a gold border ; one wore a short white jacket, and the other, the handsomer and better dressed of the two, a long straw-coloured coat.

Near the tank, where they went to preach, there was a group of Brahmins and others, and women, with their white and coloured dresses and bright brass water-vessels, were passing and repassing. This spot is the chief place of assembly in the village. Here the idle spend most of their time ; here wayfarers sit to rest, and to retail the latest news ; and here the village women stop occasionally for a minute or two, to talk over with each other their vexations and troubles,—the never-ending interests connected with rupees, annas, and pice, and with births, deaths, and marriages. It was such an unusual and unheard-of thing for a European

gentleman to come to preach to us, that the people gathered from all sides to hear what he was going to say.

The Brahmins stood somewhat superciliously a little distance off, but were evidently interested in watching what was going to happen. A number of naked and half-clad children jostled each other in the front of the crowd.

On a sign from the missionary one of the catechists mounted the steps of the stone platform. His white cotton jacket, which was badly made, hung awkwardly on his shoulders; his large white turban was loosely tied, so that it half covered his ears, and reached to the back of his neck. He had a red cotton handkerchief hanging loosely over one shoulder, and a white umbrella, and a bundle of small books and tracts under his arm. His toes were turned slightly inwards, and his head was inclined a little to one side. His soft, almond-shaped face indicated gentleness and pliancy of disposition.

His address was listened to with some impatience, especially as what he said was not very flattering. He began, 'Do you know what kind of men you Hindus are?' and he proceeded, in a sing-song manner, looking over the heads of the people, to tell them their faults and vices.

The catechist, who next spoke, was a young man with smooth, regular, finely-formed features. He had a small moustache, straight eyebrows, and a frank, open countenance. He looked like a handsome Brahmin, and his dress was in perfect harmony with the refinement and delicacy of his features.

He spoke well, earnestly, and with graceful animation; but he was soon interrupted by some of the young Brahmins, who had been whispering together.

'I have a question to ask,' said one.

'If you keep your question in mind,' said Mr. Knox, 'you may tell it to us afterwards. We cannot stop our preaching to answer questions.'

The young Brahmin stepped back among his companions. When the missionary stood up to preach, the impatience among the Brahmins, and their desire to give annoyance and show off their importance, had so increased, that two or three began to speak at once. 'We have urgent business,' shouted one, 'we cannot wait. You must answer our questions now.'

'He speaks good Tamil,' said another; 'let him go on.'

'Why don't you old men speak?' cried a youth to some staid, reverend Brahmins; 'have you nothing to say?'

A deaf, infirm old Brahmin now came along, stepped, stick in hand, into the front of the crowd, looked up at the preachers, and then round on the people, and wanted to know what it was all about. In the midst of the hubbub Mr. Knox managed to say, 'I once heard a Hindu addressing a large meeting in Scotland. The Scotch people listened to him gladly, and treated him politely. No one interrupted him while he was speaking.'

'You have spoken long enough; can't we speak now? answer our questions!' shouted some.

'If you listen quietly to what I have to say, I will

answer your questions afterwards. I hope soon to return to England. Many there will ask me about the Brahmins—how you behave when we preach. What sort of account shall I be able to give of you?'

Still interruption and contradiction.

'Many,' continued the missionary, 'consider the Brahmins among the politest people in the world. What would they think if they were to see you now?'

Some of the Brahmins began now to be a little ashamed, but still the interruption continued.

'Women when collected together,' said Mr. Knox, 'all talk at the same time. You are not women; why do you chatter like them?' These appeals at length produced the desired effect, and the missionary was allowed to proceed with his address.

'As this village,' he said, 'is near the public road, many travellers stay here for a little while to rest.

'They tell you news, inform you of their affairs, and express opinions on various subjects. You listen, but you do not always agree to what they say. Sometimes their ideas are so strange and unreasonable that you hear them with a smile and a shake of the head. As one of your own poets has said, "Some will even declare that a crow is white, and that to kill one's mother is a virtuous deed."

'Meeting a man on the road, you ask him, "Where are you going?" He perhaps replies, "I am going to the temple to see the god." You immediately think of the verse which says,

"Thinking the upright stone a god,
Four kinds of flowers you place before it:

Marching round with muttered sound,
What is that prayer you say? O fool,
That an upright stone one word can speak;
Or God in the midst of it can dwell;
As well believe the pot and ladle,
The taste of the curry, with truth, can tell."

'Or hearing that one of your friends is making preparations for a long journey, you ask him where he is going. He tells you that he has been much troubled with the thought of his sins, and that he hopes, by visiting the sacred city of Casi (Benares), and bathing in the Ganges, to obtain purification and an entrance into heaven.

'Although you may not altogether disapprove of his purpose, you think of the verse which says,

"To Casi, to Casi, there are those who say,
And break their legs with the toil of the way,
If a dog that is black to Casi go,
Will bathing there make it white as snow?"

'There are others who tell you, "We not go so far as Casi; if we bathe in the Cavery our sins will be washed away."

'In regard to this also you know what the poet says,

"Although you bathe in holy water,
  Your wickedness will not depart;
Though the filth of the body be all removed,
  Not so sin within the heart;
To behold a river is not to be pure:
  To repent and reform is the only cure."

'You thus find that many of the opinions which men express, and the doctrines which they hold, are doubtful. What one man asserts another denies; what one

believes another rejects; and even those who practise rites and ceremonies do so, not because they firmly believe in them, but merely as an experiment, and because it is the custom.

'This is the first time that we have come to your village. Many of you look upon us with suspicion, and before listening to what we have to say you imagine that our teaching must be false and injurious.

'I am sure that you will not have this opinion when you know what our doctrines really are. I will tell you nothing but what is reasonable, and what you will all agree to. Listen, and judge for yourselves.

'Every man has a body. You all, I am sure, admit that. It is with the body that we walk, eat, speak, hear, and see: with the body we perform many important acts; but the body is not the man. Cut off a leg or an arm, the man still lives, and feels, and thinks. Every man is a living soul. It is the soul that thinks, that forms plans and carries them out, that loves and hates, that feels sorrow and enjoys happiness. The body is but the covering and the instrument of the soul.

'As there are souls on earth, so there are souls in heaven. God, as you yourselves say, is the *Parama Athma*,—the Highest Soul. He is the Creator of all things. As every house had a builder, every book an author, every picture a painter, every image a carver, so the sun, moon, and stars, the earth, and all that it contains, were made by the Highest Soul.

'God, who is the highest Being in the universe, is infinitely wise, good, and holy. As He is holy, He

desires all men to be holy. He has written His law on every man's heart. When we do wrong we feel self-condemned; when we do right we are pleased and satisfied with ourselves. What is this but the voice of God speaking in our heart?

'The soul does not always remain in union with the body. The last time that I went to the palace of a young zemindar whom I used to visit, the people told me, "He is gone." What they said was true. He had not ceased to exist, but had simply left his body, and gone,—where? to God, to give an account of his deeds.

'This is what every one of us must do. At the close of our life on earth we must go, like a steward, to render an account to God of the deeds we have done while in the body; and to receive a reward, or a punishment, according as our acts have been good or bad.

'Alas! you will say, who can give a good account of his life? Who is there that does not commit sin?

'My friends, God is willing to pardon your sins if you seek His mercy. It is to tell you this that I have come to your village to-day. Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. He died on the cross, and by His death He has made atonement for the sins of all men, and God has promised to forgive all who repent and trust in Christ. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.

'Now,' said Mr. Knox, 'has any one anything to say, or any question to ask?'

Runga Rao, the schoolmaster, who had been listening to the address with a keen, suspicious look, like a cat

watching a bird,—his thin lips pressed close together, and his little twinkling eyes peering out under his overarching eyebrows, stepped forward and said—

'We agree to most of the latter part of your address; but at the beginning you said that going on pilgrimage to Casi, and bathing in sacred rivers, cannot take away our sins.'

'No,' Mr. Knox replied; 'I did not say that. What I said was, that while some of you believe that these ceremonies will remove sin, some do not. Is that statement right or wrong? I quoted to you what your own poets say about it, and I showed you, that whereas your doctrines are doubtful, and are rejected by many, the doctrines that we teach you are true and cannot be denied.'

All admitted that this was correct, and that he had said nothing that they could object to.

'There are some questions, which, if you can spare a little time, we should like to ask,' said a smooth-shaven, solemn, consequential Brahmin called Muthu Iyer, the village guru. He was held in high esteem on account of his office, which was to teach the Sanscrit prayers or charms to his disciples.

'I am entirely at your disposal,' said Mr. Knox. 'Select a guru, or some man of importance to propose the questions, and I will answer them to the best of my ability. Are you a guru?'

'Yes, I am a guru," said Muthu Iyer.

'What question do you wish to ask?'

There was a pause for some time. At length Muthu Iyer said:

'Are there many gods, or only one?'

The missionary replied by asking, 'Do you know how to find out whether a nation is ruled by one or by two sovereigns?'

'No, I do not,' said the guru.

'By the image on the money of the country,' replied the missionary. 'You see this rupee,' said he, taking one from his pocket, and holding it up. 'The image of the Queen is stamped upon it. If India were governed by two rulers, a king and a queen together, there would be two heads on this rupee. Now, God has put His stamp on every man. He has written His law in the conscience. "Do right. Do no wrong." Is there any man in the world who will say, that what is wrong ought to be done, and that what is right ought not to be done? There is no such man.

'All the coins in a country are not alike in all respects; some are made of brown copper; some of white silver; some of ruddy gold; yet all are alike in one respect; all are stamped with the image of the king. In like manner, although some men are black and some white, some bold and enterprising, others timid and cautious, some fitted to command, others born to obey; all bear in their heart the image of their Creator, viz., the absolute conviction that whatever is right ought to be done, and that whatever is wrong ought not to be done. One God alone could have written this decree on the human heart.'

This answer, which must have seemed to all who heard it a striking and original way of looking at the matter, was listened to with solemn attention. A smile

of satisfaction passed over the countenances of some, as they said, 'Yes, that is right; the answer is good.'

'I have another question to ask,' said the guru. 'Why do men worship so many gods?'

'For the same reason,' replied the missionary, 'that some men marry so many wives. God has appointed for each man one wife. The proof of this is, that an equal number of male and female children are born every year. Some men, however, not content with God's appointment, choose two, or five, and if a sultan, two or three hundred.

'In the same way, not willing to serve the true God, many men have invented gods to suit their taste and fancy. Thieves worship the god of theft. Covetous men worship Lutchmee, the goddess of riches. Licentious men worship Krishna.'

'Your answers are good, and I have no more questions to ask,' said the guru; and gravely making salaam, he turned and walked away, in a dignified manner, along with two or three others.

After they had gone a short distance, they made signs to the rest to follow; but these preferred to remain a little longer, to hear the answers to the questions which Runga Rao, the schoolmaster, was now putting.

'Why,' he inquired, 'did you say that it was wrong to bathe in sacred rivers?'

'There is nothing wrong in bathing in a river,' said Mr. Knox. 'The fault is in supposing that the water of the river can wash away sin. If you bathe as a sign that you determine to abandon your sins, and that you trust in God's mercy for forgiveness, it is a good and com-

mendable act. It is with this meaning and purpose that those who become Christians have water sprinkled over them.'

'That is why we bathe too,' said Runga Rao.

'Your motives may be all that is good,' said Mr. Knox, good-naturedly, 'but I know that very many Hindus bathe in certain rivers in order to wash away their sins.'

'It may be,' replied Runga Rao, with a solemn face, 'but there are no such men in this village.'

The hypocrite! Well aware that the religious meaning and purpose of the Hindu bathings and washings could not be defended, he adopted, in this bold way, the missionary's more reasonable explanation.

After some further conversation Mr. Knox rose and went away.

CHAPTER VII.

MY FRIEND RUNGAN—A PRACTICAL JOKE—PERSECUTING A CHRISTIAN.

I NEVER could make friends easily. Some people, by a happy frankness and forwardness of disposition, easily introduce themselves to others, enter into conversation with them, and establish bonds of union, of sympathy, and of mutual action. They make of every one they meet, if not an attached friend, at least an agreeable acquaintance.

I had so much of that awe, that undefinable fear with which most strangers at first regard each other, that I seldom could make a first advance.

My friends, therefore, have always been few, and my attachment to them has been, in most cases, warm and enthusiastic.

At this time my chief friend and companion was a boy, two or three years my senior, called Rungan. A large mouth and thick lips, broad, exposed nostrils, and high cheek-bones made his face look coarse and vulgar, and a front tooth, which had been broken with a stone in a fight with some village boys, gave a touch of comicality to his appearance. Possessed of more force

of character than is usual among Hindu boys, he was the ringleader in every mischief, and was fond of ruling and ordering others about. On this account few of the older boys liked him. They resented the tone of authority with which he addressed them.

He was singularly frank and fearless; if he told a lie, it was usually rather to justify himself than from fear of consequences.

One evening, not long after my return from Peroor, Rungan said to me, 'Come, let us hide somewhere, and I will show you some fun.'

'What are you going to do?' I asked.

'We will give the women a fright. Come, and I will show you.'

No one saw us as we ran out of the village. He climbed up into a tamarind tree, and I darted into a field of ripening cholum. The long thick stalks and large round heads of the cholum rose a foot above me, and concealed me perfectly. The darkness was increasing rapidly.

'When the women pass by you must cry "boo!" and I will drop some tamarinds on them,' said Rungan to me from the tree; 'they will think it is a devil.'

We had not long to wait till we heard the voices of a party of village women coming along, single file. Allowing those in front to pass, I gave forth an unearthly howl from the cholum, and Rungan, faithful to his engagement, dropped down tamarinds on them. The effect was instantaneous. All the women screamed. Those in front ran, while those immediately under the tree seemed transfixed with terror. Some fell flat on

the ground, and others ran trembling and screaming. Those behind ran back, and went to the village another way.

I pushed my way through the cholum, and Rungan presently joined me on the other side of the field, where we both lay hid, rather frightened at the success of our joke.

'If they find out that we did it,' said I, 'they will be terribly angry, and we shall get well beaten.'

'They will never suspect us,' said Rungan. 'They will be sure to think it was a devil; and if they do find us out, we can easily say that we did not mean anything; that it was only for fun.'

'Hush!' said I, 'there is some one coming.'

We lay quite still, and by-and-by two figures, one of whom I thought was Runga Rao, the schoolmaster, passed close to our hiding-place.

'We must do something to get him out of the way,' said one, who, by his voice, I was now sure was Runga Rao.

'His father is the most respectable man in the Agrarum (Brahmins' Street),' said the other.

'He does not disgrace his father and his family alone, but the whole Agrarum,' said the schoolmaster.

'It won't be easy to do it with poison,' said the other. His servant cooks all his food for him at the choultry.'

'Couldn't we bribe his servant?'

They had now gone so far that we could not hear what reply the other made. Rungan and I were, at first, almost as frightened as the women we had sent screaming home. It is scarcely less dangerous to be the discoverer of a plot than the victim of one.

If these Brahmins were to find out that we had overheard them, and that we shared their secret, they would perhaps do something to get us out of the way also.

Poisoning is very easily accomplished in India, and sudden death from cholera being so common, and the dead being so quickly taken away and burned, detection is difficult.

'What are we to do?' said I.

'We must go to the choultry, and see who this Brahmin is that they wish to kill. I think it must be the old pundit's son, who went to Coimbatore some time ago, and has joined the Christians.'

'If he has become a Christian, and brought disgrace on his caste, it is quite right to kill him,' said I.

'I don't think so,' said Rungan. 'I used to think like that before I went to the mission school at Coimbatore, but I have changed my mind on that subject, and a great many others. Christianity is a good religion. If any one chooses to join it, he ought not to be interfered with.'

When I reached home, two or three women were telling, with loud voices and animated gesticulations, the fright they had had.

'It was certainly a devil,' said one.

'I am sure it was,' said another, 'for I saw him. I was the last. All the rest had run away, and I had fallen down with fear. When I got up, my knees trembled so I could hardly walk; I could not run. Just as I was turning the corner to enter the village, I

looked back, and saw a great black thing coming down the tree.'

'The gods preserve us! What was it like?'

'I was too frightened to look long,' said the speaker; 'but I thought I saw great horns, and large, horrible teeth.'

'I will never go that road again,' said one; 'at least, not when it is dark.'

'Nor I, nor I,' said all the others.

Few sights are more beautiful than sunrise on the plains of India. The darkness changes, like a dissolving view, into grey twilight. A faint streak of light appears in the east, and spreads upward in the sky. The stars look sickly; the dark grey and purple hues of morning become silver grey, and then the sun, suffusing the eastern sky with a warm blush, peeps above the horizon, and as if in eager haste to dispossess its enemy, night, of its dominion, mounts upward, disclosing itself a great ball of fire.

It was on a morning such as this, the morning after our adventure in the cholum field, that I arose before daybreak and went out to meet Rungan.

Not a speck was to be seen in the glorious dome overhead. The village soon awaked. The children came out of the houses and commenced their play.

> 'Like sportive deer they coursed about,
> And shouted as they ran.'

Groups of labourers, bullocks carelessly dragging between them the light wooden plough, here and there a farmer carrying the plough on his own shoulders, set out on their way to the fields.

A stream of women, clad in scarlet, and yellow, and blue, with large, bright brass water-vessels balanced on their heads or supported against their sides, proceeded to the village tank. Their bare arms were elaborately tattooed, and were adorned with heavy silver armlets and glass bangles. Their necks shone with strings of red coral beads, and their noses and ears were illuminated with jewels of gold. Some were going to the tank simply to draw water, others to bathe and wash their clothes.

In loud and animated tones they chatted as they went.

'How have you been since your marriage?' inquired a middle-aged woman, called Ammay, of a tall graceful girl, who was walking in front of her. 'I hope your husband is kind to you.'

Meenatchy, without looking round, replied, 'I don't think he cares for me. He never speaks to me.'

'I am sorry to hear that,' said Ammay. 'He was eager enough to get you.'

'I thought that I should be happy. Before I was married, my husband's mother used to treat me very kindly—give me sweetmeats and praised my beauty. Now, she and her daughters are always finding fault with me. I can do nothing right.'

'I am sorry for you,' said Ammay. 'But such is our fate. It is a punishment for sins committed in a former birth. If a young wife breaks a mud pot, it is gold; if the mother-in-law breaks it, it is only mud. Have they been setting your husband against you?'

'They don't speak to him much when I am present,

but they are all on one side against me,' said Meenatchy, with a sigh.

'They are afraid that your husband will love you, and give his earnings into your hand, and that you will become the mistress of the house,' said Ammay.

'I am sure I don't wish for that. If they treat me like this, it will be better for me to die. Is there nothing that I can do?'

Up till this time Meenatchy had been walking in front, and the conversation had been carried on without their seeing each other's faces. Now, in her distress, Meenatchy turned round to Ammay for her answer.

'What mark is that on your cheek? It was not there before you were married,' asked Ammay.

'My mother-in-law did this with a fire-brand when I was cooking one day.'

'Ah! I see,' said Ammay. 'They wish to spoil your good looks. They seem determined to prevent your husband loving you.'

'Alas! What am I to do?' said Meenatchy. 'Is there no way of winning him to my side?'

'I know an old woman that can supply you with some medicine to give him that will make him love you.'

'Do you, indeed? Is it a very strong medicine?'

'You know Unbay who was married last year?'

'Yes,' said Meenatchy. 'She was treated so cruelly by her mother-in-law and by her husband that she ran away to her parents.'

'Well, her husband waited a while, and when she did not return he went to coax her back. He stayed two or

three days with her in her father's house; and while he was there she gave him some of this medicine. Now he loves her only, and is quite turned against his mother.'

'Will you get me some of this medicine, and I will put it in his food?' said Meenatchy.

They had now reached the square tank, with its four flights of granite steps leading down to a pool, in which men, women, and children were bathing, washing their clothes, and lifting out the green, unwholesome-looking water to carry to their homes.

'Have you heard,' said one of the women, who was resting her water-vessel on her knee, on the top step of the tank, preparatory to lifting it on to her head, 'have you heard that we are to pour water on the gods this evening?'

'No; is it so? Ah! well, the gods are angry. No rain has fallen for three months. If we pour water on them, perhaps they will take pity and send us some rain,' said Meenatchy, and stepping down, she loosened one end of her cloth, dipped it in the water, swung it over one shoulder, and dashed it on the lowest granite step. Repeating this till that portion of her cloth was clean, she undid another part, and treated it in the same way. At length, screening herself with the end that she had washed, she let that which was next her body slip off; then tying the wet end hastily, she completed the washing of her cloth. Near her a man, with nothing on but a small strip of cloth, was washing himself.

Seeing Rungan approach the tank, I joined him, and we sauntered together towards the choultry. A group

of Brahmins were there, some standing, others sitting on the verandah, engaged in eager conversation with a young man, who, although he looked like a Brahmin, was dressed differently from any of the others. Instead of a cloth thrown over his naked shoulders he wore a long white coat. His features were regular and delicately formed, like those of a young woman, and there was a look of frank sincerity in his face, very different from the sneering, sneaking appearance of many of those who were conversing with him.

The schoolmaster, his small ferret eyes peering from their deep sockets, and his thin lips pressed together, stood listening to the conversation, but took no part in it. The group consisted mostly of idle, lazy men, who subsisted on the small income of their lands, and on the gifts of the lower castes, and who spent their time in mere idleness and debauchery.

'What have you come back for?' asked a short fat man, with round face and small nose.

'He has had enough of beef and brandy, and wishes to be restored to his caste again,' sneered a thin cynical youth.

'No,' said the young man whom they were addressing, 'I don't wish to be received into caste again. You know, Soobrao, why I have come,' said he to the fat Brahmin. 'Here is your letter promising to let me take away your daughter, whom I have married, if I only came to fetch her.'

'Do you think she would consent to live with a pariah?' said the other, with a sneer.

'If you refuse to give me your daughter, why then

did you ask me to come here? Is it to get me into your power again?'

'You have brought disgrace on your family and your caste by joining the religion of the pariahs.'

'It is not the religion of pariahs. You call me a pariah; I am no more a pariah than the collector is, or the governor. A man may be a murderer, and an adulterer, and you don't call him a pariah; but because I worship the true God and obey my conscience, you call me a pariah.'

'Couldn't you have worshipped God as we do, without disgracing us all by becoming a Christian?' said an old Brahmin, with white eyebrows, and a thin, white moustache.

'Worship God as you do!' exclaimed the youth, with indignation, 'adore the licentious Krishna, meditate on the vicious Vishnu, bow down to a stone, and have my offerings taken to the temple in a procession of harlots! It is because I won't do this, that you brand me with the name of pariah.'

'He is mad,' said one. 'What is the use of talking to him? Come, let us go.'

When all had gone, Rungan said to him—

'These people are your enemies; they will injure you if they can.'

'Yes,' he replied, with a sigh; 'I ought to have known that there was no use coming here; but they wrote to me so often that I thought they were sincere, and that I should be able to get my affairs settled.'

'Be on your guard,' said Rungan. 'I don't like the way

I saw some of them speaking together. I think they are making a plot against you.'

'Very likely. They tried once to poison me. I am careful now, and I will leave to-morrow morning.'

'If anything is done it will be to-night,' said Rungan to me, as we walked away. 'What do you say to our slipping out and hiding somewhere?'

'What if we are found out? They will kill us too,' said I.

'There is no fear of that,' replied Rungan. 'No one suspects us. I know a glorious place to hide, where we can see the front of the choultry, and no one can see us. I will meet you in the cholum field near the tree where the devil appeared the other night.'

Soon after supper, declaring that I was tired and very sleepy, I lay down before the others and pretended to fall fast asleep. I waited till all had lain down, and till the heavy breathing and loud snores taught me that I could safely rise and slip out. The sleep of a Hindu is usually very sound. He can lie down anywhere, on a hard granite stone, on the rough ground under a tree, in a small, hot, stifling room, at any time, and fall so fast asleep that a pistol might be fired over his head without awaking him.

As I slipped out a dog barked, and soon another, a little way off, gave an answering howl. I ran quickly till I reached the cholum field. No one had seen me. The night was exquisitely balmy—neither cold nor warm. The moon had not yet risen, and the cloudless dome of heaven was as if powdered over with sparkling diamond dust.

'Let us creep along through the cholum,' said Rungan, whom I found waiting for me, 'till we come to the hedge that goes in front of the choultry.'

We had not lain long in our hiding-place in one of the gaps in the hedge, before we saw two muffled figures come and stand looking at the Brahmin Christian who was sleeping on the verandah; his servant was also fast asleep a few yards from him. The two plotters lifted a large granite stone, that had been cut for a step, and placed it on the breast and neck of the sleeper. He gave a groan and they ran away. Rungan sprang forward, I followed, and we exerted all our strength to help the youth to free himself. He gasped for breath, and stared wildly round for a minute.

'Who are you?' he said. 'Did you put this stone on my chest?'

'No,' said Rungan. 'We are the two boys that spoke to you this morning. We thought some mischief would be done to you, so we watched, and when the men who put this stone on you ran away, we came to help you.'

'I must start at once,' said he. 'I will never trust myself in this village again.'

He awoke his servant, ordered him to tie his brass drinking vessel and other things in a handkerchief, and thanking us for the kindness we had done him, started off into the darkness.

CHAPTER VIII.

HINDU FESTIVALS—MEENATCHY'S MARRIED LIFE—THE CAR FEAST.

THE festivals were our gala-days. They brought rest, recreation, and excitement into the dull monotony of our existence. Each festival was a season of pleasure and joyous activity. No one was left to sit idle, or to choose his own method of spending the day: every one had something to do—a part to perform, now as an actor, now as a spectator. The women, especially, looked forward to these occasions with eager anticipation. Stores had to be laid in, the house cleaned and whitewashed, and, when the important day arrived, the body had to be bathed and rubbed with saffron, the hair to be combed, oiled, and plaited with flowers: fine clothes and splendid jewels to be taken out and worn, friends to be visited, callers to be entertained, and all the gay excitement of the feast to be enjoyed.

In writing thus, I do not, of course, refer to the minor holidays that take place every new moon. These were welcome, indeed, as we had no other day of rest in the month; but they were not celebrated with any pomp. Those whose parents were dead fasted, and performed

ceremonies for the repose and satisfaction of their souls. Others merely rested, by abstaining from their ordinary work.

The first great feast of the year is the Pongol, or harvest feast. The house having been thoroughly white-washed without and within, the floors purified with cow dung, all the old pots broken and thrown away, and their places supplied with new ones from the potter, all the men, women, and children in the house assemble in the hall, and sit in separate groups.

A Brahmin priest enters, and taking some of the new rice from the large pot, offers it to a picture of one of the gods, drawn with chalk on the floor.

After this act of worship, the rice is distributed to all present, and solemnly eaten. The beggars waiting outside receive alms of money and grain, and presents are sent to the Brahmins.

To feed and bestow gifts on the Brahmins forms a part of the ceremonial observed at every festival; and many of these men are so idle and lazy, that they are content to subsist entirely on what they obtain in this way. They have the convictions and sentiments of your born gentleman—that nothing is so degrading as work, and that there is no dishonour in living as drones in the hive on the industry of others.

On one of the days of the feast worship is paid to the sun, as the great fertiliser, and on another to the bullocks and cows. Next to the sun, have they not been the most serviceable in producing the harvest, and in ministering to the welfare of the village?

The bullocks—these large, docile, stolid creatures,

who plough the land, irrigate the fields, and draw the carts; the cows, whose gifts are so valuable—the milk as food, the dung, when mixed with water, as the chief means of purifying the houses and the temples; when made into cakes and dried in the sun, as fuel for cooking; and when reduced to ashes, as a means of freeing the soul from sin. These animals are washed and ornamented with flowers, and their horns are painted with bright colours. They are then led in procession round the village, incense is burnt before them, and the people, falling down, worship them as gods.

In different places these customs vary somewhat, but what I have described was the usual practice in Poothoor.

I remember one occasion when my father was performing the cow pongol. He had ornamented the cattle shed with garlands of mango leaves, and with bunches of cocoanut flowers, leaves, and fruit. The floor of the shed was made pure and clean with white sand. In a spot in the middle, made sacred by being smeared with cow dung, a large pot, containing a mixture of milk and water, was boiling. My father was watching it intently. My father's brother and I, with some of the servants and the women of the household, stood behind him, greatly interested in what was going on. A group of villagers were looking on from the outside.

'Ayaswamey is a prosperous man,' said Veeran, Meenatchy's husband; 'his pongol always comes right.'

'He is kind to the Brahmins,' replied Runga Rao; 'that is the reason why his pot boils so beautifully.'

If the froth from the milk and water boils over and flows down the sides of the vessel, it is supposed to be a good sign; if it does not swell and overflow, the gods are angry; if it rises and falls over towards the north or the east, there will be much prosperity during the year; if towards the south or west, bad luck will come.

'I am always unlucky,' said Veeran. 'Last year, when I was making pongol, the froth seemed to sink instead of rising in the pot. At last I got into a rage and dashed the whole thing in pieces.'

'Ah! ah! You know the proverb, "Anger, sin, and crime—these three are equal,"' said the schoolmaster.

'Oh, just what might be expected. One of my best cows died, and a fine young bull-calf strayed away, and I never got it again.

'You must examine your pot more carefully next time,' said the postmaster. 'There was very likely a small hole in the bottom which had more to do with the failure of your pongol than the anger of your gods.'

'It may be so; but why had my pot a hole in it? and why did my cow die, and my calf stray?'

'It was the will of the gods, I suppose,' said the postmaster. 'The chief thing, however, is to take care of the cattle. The English make no pongol, and their cows don't die.'

'The English are the curse of the country,' cried the schoolmaster, in a rage; 'with their new-fangled education, their language, and their atheism, they are destroying all our customs, and simply training people to be idle and discontented—"mere troublers without

design, repiners without hope, and schemers without self-control."'

'I don't know about all that,' said Veeran, 'but I know that we never get proper rain now, since the English came and covered the country with their railways and telegraphs.'

My father had by this time finished the ceremony of watching the pot, burning incense before it, and supplicating the god for a blessing during the year.

'Boyan,' he said, turning to one of the servants, 'take these flowers and plantains, and tie them round the necks of the bullocks. Here are some coins and betel nuts to tie with the flowers.'

'Shall I loose the young bull also, sir? He is very wild,' said Boyan.

'Yes; put the money and flowers on them all, and drive them round the village. The pongol has been good to-day, and we must not curtail any of the ceremonies. If the bull hurts any one it will be their fate. What can we do?'

The bullocks were adorned and driven out of the shed. They had been well fed, and kept without work for several days; so that they galloped off, tails high in the air, tossing their heads, and kicking wildly. The village youths rushed after them, and with shouts and excited antics sent them careering along, while the more daring tried to snatch the flowers and money from their necks. Happily, the day closed with no accident, and the exhausted animals, their flowers and gifts all taken from them, were driven quietly home to their shed.

The next great feast of the year is the Tool Feast.

It usually takes place in the month of September, and, in its meaning and purpose somewhat resembles the pongol. The implements of labour, the means by which each man obtains his livelihood, are, for the time, regarded as gods, and solemnly worshipped. Soldiers place their guns, bullets, swords, flags, belts, and other things in a heap, employ a Brahmin priest to consecrate them, and then, ornamenting the ground in front of them, burning incense, and presenting offerings of flowers, fruits, and other things, they bow down before them, and pray that these weapons and instruments of war may make them victorious over all their enemies. In the same way the carpenter worships his square, compass, axe, hammer, chisel, and nails; the blacksmith his pincers, bellows, and anvil; the bricklayer his trowel, smoothing board, and spirit level; the barber his scissors, razor, and strop; the tailor his needle, thimble, scissors, thread, and smoothing iron; the shopman his scales and weights; and schoolboys their books, slate, pencil, pen, and ink bottle.

We schoolboys used, dressed in our best, and carrying a short stick in each hand, to go along with the master to the houses of our parents. When we entered a house we immediately arranged ourselves in a circle, back to back, and face to face; sang a song, and danced a kind of reel, keeping time to the music and to the blows which we struck on our partners' sticks. The dance and song had a very pleasing effect. This is the only occasion on which Hindus enjoy the pleasure of the dance. With kind words, and with gifts to our teacher, we were dismissed from each house.

The most stirring and animated scene was displayed when the idol, mounted on a large wooden horse or lion, was taken out of the temple to go a-hunting. The hobby horse, with the god fastened to it by ropes, was placed on the shoulders of a few of the strongest and fleetest men in the village ; a Brahmin priest, with a bow and arrow in his hand, sat beside the idol. Suddenly, the signal being given, the bearers set off at the top of their speed to a place where a plantain tree had been fixed. They dashed round it three times, and then the priest aimed an arrow at the tree, and the people, with a great shout, rushed upon it, cut it down, and every one snatched a piece of its large leaves and fixed it in his hair or in his turban.

If the juice that comes from the tree was of a white colour, it was a good sign ; if it was tinged with red, the omen was considered to forbode calamities.

At this feast, fathers-in-law entertain and bestow gifts on their sons-in-law, and in many other ways the festival is accompanied with much cheerful social activity.

The Theebavali festival, which takes place in October, is held in commemoration of a victory said to have been gained by the popular god, Krishna, over a ferocious giant.

The story is, that this giant so afflicted and oppressed, not only all the inhabitants of the world, but the gods themselves, that, provoked beyond endurance, they appealed for relief to the chief deity, called Juthiran. Juthiran paid a visit to Krishna, and represented the case to him. He at once set off for the giant's city, fought with him the whole day, slew him, and delivered 16,100 virgins, 6,000 four-tusked elephants, and an innumerable

number of horses, etc., etc., that were in his possession. On that day, Krishna was prevented from bathing till after sunset. On this day, therefore, the people think that to bathe by day would be a sin, but that to bathe by night is an act of merit, and every one enjoys, during the night, the luxury of an oil bath. They do not plunge into a tub of oil, but every one has his body well rubbed with oil and afterwards washed with soap nut and water.

Every one puts on new clothes. They fry and eat sweet cakes, give presents, and shout, 'To-day our distress was removed, the giant was destroyed, and we escaped.'

The whole village is illuminated, and fireworks are burned.

It would be tedious to describe all the feasts, with their peculiar ceremonies, that occur at different periods. All have much in common, and yet each has a meaning and a ceremonial peculiar to itself.

Few know, and few care to know, the meaning of the ceremonies they perform. To the vast majority the festivals are simply seasons of fun, enjoyment, and display.

Of late years, much knowledge on these matters, from a source and in a way that no one could have anticipated, is spreading among the people. Strange to say, it is from the missionaries and their Christian helpers that the people are learning the meaning of many of their heathen ceremonies.

Formerly most people were content to observe the rites and customs of their religion simply as a matter of form and custom, but now many are studying the doc-

trines and philosophy of Hinduism, in order to meet and answer the statements of the Christian preachers and the Christian books. The result is not always favourable to Hinduism.

Like all village children, Meenatchy had grown up to maidenhood in a free, open, unrestrained manner.

She was active and cheerful—had a merry twinkle in her eye, and much grace and vivacity of movement. Her face was pleasing, because it suggested good sense and kindliness of temper. It was rare that Meenatchy gave way to those fits of passion and caprice so common among Hindu women. She was fond of playing tricks, and would lay a plot, pilfer, and lie with the gravest and most composed expression.

Although never allowed to forget that she was only a girl, she had been a favourite with many, and her life had been a happy one.

When six years old she was married to her cousin—a boy four years her senior. They had played together among the other village children, and both, of course, knew the bond that united them. With the close of her girlhood, almost all her happiness ceased.

A few weeks before the final ratification of her marriage, she had been closely confined to the house.

Her husband had indeed taken her home with music and the show of honour, but when she crossed the threshold as a wife her sorrows commenced.

She and her husband formed but an insignificant portion of a patriarchal family. Besides her father-in-law and mother-in-law, there were in the house a broken-hearted, discontented widow, and three sisters-in-

law, who were married but had not yet grown up to womanhood. Her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law treated her worse than a slave. They not only gave her all the mean work of the house to do, but watched her with jealous eyes, and found fault with everything she did. Seeing her careful to keep herself neat and tidy, they would say, 'Are you a temple girl, that you spend your whole time in combing your hair and tying your cloth?'

When, overcome by their reproaches, she became careless about her appearance, they would say, 'You are a regular sloven, always dirty and untidy.'

Meenatchy was naturally of a frank, confiding, trustful disposition. She delighted to take those around her into her confidence, to tell them her thoughts and fancies—any piece of news she heard, or any event she saw.

At first she had talked in this artless way to her husband's mother and sisters; but they treated her with so much coldness, sneered at her sensibility, and cast up to her the very confidences that in the openness of her heart she had given them, that it was little to be wondered at that she became silent and reserved, and sought elsewhere the companionship and sympathy that she could not find in her own home.

At first her husband was disinclined to listen to the slanders of his mother and sisters against his wife, and would sometimes take her part against them.

This only increased their ill-will, and made them persecute him along with his wife. The food would be late; the curry would be spoiled; there was always

something wrong, and the blame was invariably thrown on Meenatchy.

At length they gained their object. The young wife's temper was soured; she became careless about her person, and quarrelled with her husband. Only then, when Veeran's mind was turned against his wife, when he began to abuse and beat her, and refuse her nice clothes and jewels, only then was a measure of peace restored to the household. Veeran became a favourite with his mother and sisters, and Meenatchy was left to sorrow alone.

Her only comfort was the thought that, by-and-by, she would, perhaps, be a mother, and even a stepmother, that her turn for being honoured would come, and that she would exercise the same authority over others as was now being exercised over her. One day, as I entered the doorway of her house, I heard loud talking, and looking in I saw the mother-in-law standing, and with excited gestures pouring forth a tirade against Meenatchy.

On the floor beside the angry woman was a little machine, like a mangle, through which she had been passing a quantity of raw cotton to clear the seeds from it. Her two daughters were sitting on the floor, grinding corn with a small hand-mill, consisting of two circular stones, one of which they were causing to revolve on the other.

Meenatchy was standing, combing and smoothing her hair, and putting a small dot of red powder on her forehead, with the assistance of a looking-glass, about as large as the palm of her hand.

'Smoothing the hair, tying flowers, and putting a mark on the forehead!' exclaimed her mother-in-law, in a sarcastic tone. 'What man is she going to deceive? See how she adorns herself! When will her beauty be destroyed? She'll be ugly and miserable enough by-and-by!'

'What have I done,' said Meenatchy, 'that you abuse me so? You are always scolding me.'

'Hold your tongue!' shouted the mother-in-law. 'Are you the mistress of this house? No one can look at you or speak to you, but you must give impudence.'

'I wish I had never come here to live,' said Meenatchy. 'It would be better for me to die than to suffer what you inflict on me.'

'She will be telling her husband, too, and setting him against us,' said one of the girls at the mill.

'Let her try to do it,' said the mother-in-law, with a threatening gesture.

Seeing the household in this condition, I stayed outside on the front verandah. Presently I heard one or two slaps and loud cries, and almost immediately after Meenatchy came running out, sobbing bitterly.

'Why am I made to suffer like this?' she cried; 'I cannot bear it; I cannot bear it!'

'Why is your mother-in-law so hard on you?' I asked, trying to comfort her.

'I do not know,' she said. 'She is always like that. If she does not like me, why did she allow her son to marry me?'

I was silent for some time. At length I asked, 'Are

you going to roll round the temple at the car feast, on Thursday?'

'Yes,' she replied. 'I made a vow to do so; I thought the god might take pity on me, and remove some of my troubles.'

'I don't think it is of any use,' I replied. 'I am to perform the ceremony, too, but if I could escape I should be glad. I don't believe in it.'

'But didn't the god deliver you when you were attacked with cholera? If your parents had not made that vow, perhaps you would have died.'

'Why did not the vow save my mother too?' I asked.

'I don't know,' said Meenatchy; 'but if there was no use in the ceremony, so many people would not practise it, nor would our forefathers have established the custom.'

'Yes, that is how it is,' I said. 'We must do as others do. I wonder if it really pleases the god to see us rolling in the dirt.'

'People say that when the gods see us happy and comfortable they are jealous, and that if we inflict pain on ourselves or do anything disgusting they will not afflict us. All suffering, too, is meritorious. The greater the penance we endure, the less shall we suffer on account of our sins in future births.'

'I wish I hadn't to do it,' I said; 'but it will be soon over, and then I am going to Coimbatore.'

'I heard that,' said Meenatchy. 'You are going to the mission school there to learn English. You will, by-and-by, pass examinations and become a great man;

perhaps a Tasildar some day; then you will be too proud to remember your poor friends.'

'I hope not,' I replied. 'If I am ever a Tasildar in this district, I will protect you and see that your husband treats you properly.

'Heigh ho!' she sighed. 'It will be a long time before you will have power enough to do me any good; but now I must go. My husband will soon return, and he will be angry if he finds me out here.'

So saying she ran into the house, and I wended my way, thoughtfully, homewards.

Ever since the visit to Peroor I had been restless and dissatisfied. The village life appeared flat and unprofitable. Deep religious longings, too, had awakened within me. I yearned for some god whom I could really worship, and in whose protection I could confide. I had begun to see that few reverenced the gods whom they professed to serve, and that many disbelieved in them altogether.

In this dissatisfied, unhappy mood, it was with great pleasure that I learned that my father intended to leave his farm entirely to the care of his brother, and go to live in Coimbatore.

A few months after the death of my mother, my father had married a young girl, and he intended to prepare a home for her in Coimbatore.

'After the car feast, and after you have performed the ceremony of Ungaprathat-chanum (of rolling flat on the ground round the temple), we will go,' said my father to me.

This, then, was something to look forward to. The

knowledge that soon after the disgusting ceremony was performed we should say farewell to the village and enter on a new and more stirring life in Coimbatore, enabled me to anticipate the festival with more composure. Ah, little did I then know what was in store for me in the future!

A bright, cloudless, balmy morning ushered in the day of the car feast.

The car is a large wooden structure, in shape resembling a cart, piled high and broad with a load of straw. It is covered with carvings representing events in the lives of the gods. Many of these carvings are simply grotesque, but some, with the view of interesting the people and giving additional spice to the sacred festivals, are grossly obscene. The car rests on rough wooden wheels, and is drawn with long thick ropes by the crowds of people who flock to the feasts.

A canopy had been placed on the top of the car, and underneath its shade sat the musicians and some of the priests.

Dressed in gay clothing, the villagers came streaming in from all the neighbouring villages and hamlets. Some carried brass plates, in which a little light blazed and flickered; others brought offerings of flowers and fruits; while many came empty-handed, and seemed to care chiefly for the pleasure of mixing in a crowd and meeting their friends. Amid much confusion and shouting, the long thick ropes were attached to the car; one or two of the priests and musicians mounted to the top and sat under the gorgeous canopy, from whence they lowered a basket, into which the people

dropped their gifts. When the basket was full it was raised to the top of the car, and lowered again for more. Many of the people were idling about, and gazing at the futile efforts of those who were trying to drag the car.

'Come along; take hold of the ropes; pull the car!' shouted the schoolmaster.

Thus urged, a number went to lend a hand at the ropes, but many moved away and simply looked on. Runga Rao, and some of the other Brahmins, pushed and scolded and coaxed. With a great confused shout the people at the ropes pulled, the car shook, the wheels creaked, and the clumsy structure moved an inch or two, and then stopped.

'They won't get the car round the temple to-day unless they pull more vigorously, or unless more people come to the festival,' said my father, who was looking on, to the postmaster of the village, a vain, conceited young fellow, who, because he knew English and wore a jacket, thought himself superior to every one.

'You don't believe in these things, perhaps?' said my father.

'They are needed by the village rabble, who, without these ceremonies and festivals, would forget the gods altogether, but an educated man does not require anything of this kind.'

'I partly agree with you,' said my father; 'and yet it was on account of this festival that I delayed my departure for Coimbatore. My son is fulfilling a vow to-day. See, there he is,' said he, pointing with his staff to the place where Meenatchy and I, with

four others, were laboriously rolling full length on the ground.

'I heard of your vow,' said the postmaster. 'Don't you think it was the medicine you gave your son, and not the vow, that secured his recovery?'

THE GOD GANESA.

'It may be so, but who knows? The vow was made, and the god might be angry if it were not fulfilled.'

'It is right to follow the custom. After all, that is the safest rule,' said the postmaster.

Dirty, giddy, stupefied, I finished the prescribed distance, and staggered home to wipe the filth from

my face. During the rest of the day, however, until meal-time, I went about with my soiled clothes.

Several ineffectual efforts were made to drag the car. A number of people, instead of helping, climbed up a tree, and sat on a long branch watching the crowd below. A boy who was perched on a higher branch made the others laugh by shouting a song in good-humoured ridicule of the god Ganesa, who is usually represented as a fat man, with an elephant's head, seated on a rat. He is sometimes called the belly god. The boy sang with a shrill voice :—

> 'Poor Gampate bewails his rat,
> Abstracted by felonious cat.
> "My legs are short ; how shall I trudge?
> And how can this big belly budge?"'

The people laughed and shouted, and suddenly the branch, which was old and rotten, broke with a crash, and threw the people on the top of one another to the ground. They uttered terrible shrieks and cries ; some lay on the ground moaning, and others rose and felt themselves all over, to see if any bones were broken. Several were injured severely, and two were killed.

This accident at once put an end to the festival. The car was deserted, and the crowd began to disperse to their villages. Many said that the god had taken revenge on them because they did not drag the car and because they laughed when the boy sang the song. They did not seem to consider that the boy himself escaped entirely uninjured.

CHAPTER IX.

I JOIN THE COIMBATORE MISSION SCHOOL.

I WAS fourteen years old when we left Poothoor to go and live in the town of Coimbatore. We stayed for a few weeks in the house of my aunt, until my father's young wife, who had now reached maturity, should be brought home to live with him and keep house for us. The house which we finally got was not so large and comfortable as the one we had occupied in Poothoor, my father grudging the rents that were demanded for the best houses. It was in the same street in which my aunt lived, and was quite large and comfortable enough for our purposes. The street is broad, and is ornamented with palm trees, planted close to the low-tiled verandahs. One or two of the palms are growing *through* the roofs of the houses.

Rungan and Chinnaswamey, my two chief companions and friends, having no relatives in Coimbatore with whom they could live, were staying at a place called a hostel, where, for a few rupees a month, they got food and a share of a long, low, dirty, common room.

'Father,' said I one morning, 'Rungan has promised to come round this way to-morrow morning and take

me to school. You need not come with me. I am old enough to introduce myself.'

'Very well,' said my father. 'I should like to pay my respects to the missionary gentleman and to the head-master, but I can do that some other time.'

Rungan came a few minutes before seven, and shouted in at the door, 'Are you ready?' I was just finishing a little cold rice, so, hastily washing my mouth and hands, I thrust my arms into my new white jacket, tied on my best turban, and went out.

'We are late, I fear,' said Rungan, 'and the head-master always canes those who come after prayers.'

We ran quickly, and soon overtook a group of boys with slates and books in their hands and under their arms, dressed, some in white, others in print jackets, some with a coloured handkerchief tied round their head, and others with white peaked caps. One boy had evidently been newly married, as he wore a splendid scarlet satin jacket, and a gorgeous gold-bordered yellow turban.

'Has the bell not rung yet?' said Rungan to Chinnaswamey.

'No; we are in plenty of time. Rama Rao, the head-master, is behind us. I saw him in front of his house as we passed.'

One or two of the teachers, Brahmin youths, with long white coats and white turbans, and a number of the schoolboys, were standing in the school doorway and in the street, waiting for the head-master.

The school is in the centre of the town, at one end of the Brahmins' quarters.

When the head-master came bustling up, we all crowded into the school, so different in every respect from Runga Rao's miserable shed in Poothoor.

The two large halls, which, divided by an arch, form the school, were clean; the Venetian windows were painted green, and the brick floor was covered with a smooth, hard coating of tar; the benches were arranged in a circle round each teacher's desk and blackboard.

A little bell was rung; we were all silent; one of the teachers bowed his head, and with shut eyes offered prayer. Some of the boys, and two of the masters, who were Christians, shut their eyes and bowed their heads also; but the rest of us, the Hindus and Mohammedans, stood with heads erect and eyes wide open.

The prayer over, the boys quickly dispersed to their classes, and all the small boys went away to a separate building on the other side of the street.

I, with two other boys, went to the head-master's desk, and stood waiting to be enrolled.

A string of boys, with rueful faces, came to receive punishment for being late.

Just then Mr. Knox entered, and the whole school rose and stood, till, with a wave of the hand, he motioned them to sit.

'What are all these boys wanting?' he asked the head-master.

'They are waiting to be punished for coming late.'

'Do you cane as many as this every morning?'

'Yes, sir; the punishment seems to have no effect.'

'Then why don't you try something else? Make

every boy that comes late pay a farthing for each offence. I see that some, too, come without a head cloth. That is very disrespectful, is it not?'

'Yes, sir. It is not proper to sit bare-headed in class.'

'Fine them also. It is the parents who ought to look to these matters, and the only way to make them do so is to touch their pockets.'

'It will look very mercenary,' said the head-master, 'to fine the boys; and I don't think it will do any good.'

'I don't consider it at all mercenary,' replied the missionary. 'I don't want fines, but proper behaviour. Give the boys fair warning, and try this plan for three months; if it fails, you can return to the cane. I assure you, you won't get many fines.'

Mr. Knox's prophecy proved true. From that day no boy was to be seen without a head-cloth, and it was very seldom that any one came late.

'What is this boy waiting for?' said Mr. Knox, turning to me.

'I wish to be admitted into the school,' I said, with a good deal of timidity. It was the first time I had ever spoken to a European gentleman.

'You are a big boy; what school have you been attending?'

I told him.

'Ah! a village school. Rama Rao, you had better examine him, and see what class he is fit for. I fear his attainments won't be much.'

After my examination, during which I could see a

good deal of dissatisfaction and half-concealed contempt on Rama Rao's face, he placed me in a class where the boys were all smaller than I. The teacher, a fat, greasy-looking Brahmin youth, was standing on one side, and the class was receiving a religious lesson from—no less a person than the young man whose life had been attempted in our village, and whom Rungan and I had helped to save. The boys in the class were mostly keen, intelligent, vivacious Brahmins. They were sitting side by side with boys of lower castes; one or two, as I afterwards learned, were even the children of washermen and of pariahs. The washermen's sons were the dirtiest boys in the class.

Presently Mr. Knox came to our class, and after asking the teacher what the lesson was he said to us—

'You are getting a catechism lesson. What is the question?'

'What must we do to obtain the forgiveness of our sins?' said a smart Brahmin boy at the top of the class.

'I wish you to tell me,—not the answer in the catechism, but your own opinion on this matter. What do you think we must do to obtain the forgiveness of our sins?'

The head boy hesitated a moment, and then replied, 'We must repent.'

This answer was new and strange to me. It was not what my father, or my former teacher, Runga Rao, would have said. They would have spoken of temple services and penances, of bestowing gifts on the Brahmins, of pilgrimages and bathing in sacred rivers.

'What you say is true,' said the missionary. 'We must repent; but is that all that is necessary?'

'Yes; if we repent of our sins, God will forgive us.'

'What is your opinion, and yours, and yours?' he asked, going down the class.

All said that repentance was alone necessary.

'Suppose,' said the missionary, 'that some one had killed your father; he would be seized, put in prison, and by-and-by be brought before the judge and condemned to die. While lying in prison waiting for death, perhaps he would repent, be very sorry for what he had done, and resolve never to do it again. If you were sure that his repentance was sincere, would you beg the judge to pardon him?'

'No,' said the boys. 'If he had killed our father he must die.'

'But then he has repented. If repentance is sufficient to remove sin, why should not that murderer be forgiven?'

We were all perfectly firm. A concrete example like this was too much for us. No one would admit that the murderer should be pardoned.

Mr. Knox smiled quietly, and said no more. He evidently thought it best to leave us to draw our own conclusions.

After the lesson was over, he talked to the Scripture master in a low tone about his work. As I was at the end of the bench, I overheard most of their conversation.

'Soondram Pillay,' said he, 'I hope the boys don't give you much trouble now.'

'Sometimes they are impertinent, sir; but I did not think it necessary to bring it to your notice.'

'In what way are they impertinent?'

'Please excuse me. I hope that you will not punish them. They behave much better now.'

'Very well, I will not speak to them about it. What do they do?'

'Sometimes a boy will tell me that Christianity is not true, or he will speak about "belly Christians," and compare them with the heathen; or a boy will make remarks about some of the Bible stories. Once when I was teaching the commandments, I asked a boy, "What is the second commandment?" He answered, "Thou *shalt* worship idols." I said, "That is not the answer. Repeat it correctly." "Yes, sir, that is what you told us, worship idols." "Sit down," I said. Then I asked another boy. He answered in the same way. I sent them to the head-master, who rebuked them, and came and gave some advice to the class.'

'I can easily understand the unwillingness of the boys to repeat a commandment that so flatly condemns their own convictions and practice,' said Mr. Knox. 'In a case like that, you should be content with simply teaching the lesson, without asking questions that will give the boys pain to answer. Look upon your class as a preacher does on his congregation. Let your whole manner, and all your illustrations and arguments, be such as to commend the subject to the boys, to awaken their interest, and in as pleasant a way as possible produce conviction. Teach, if possible, nothing at all that you cannot show to be reasonable. Many reject

much truth that would be infinitely useful to them, because it is taught along with doctrines which they cannot endure. Christ at first withheld many things from His disciples because they were not able to bear them.'

'Must I not make the boys commit the catechism by heart?'

This was a catechism compiled by the missionary with a system of ethics and theology adapted to Hindus.

'Certainly not,' replied Mr. Knox. 'Let the meaning be impressed on their minds. The more trouble they take to learn the words, the less attention will they give to the meaning, and the greater will be their disgust with the whole thing afterwards. If you teach properly, and gain their attention, their minds cannot fail to be influenced. You wish to change their convictions, and not to give them merely a form of sound words.'

Almost the whole work of the school was done in English. The Tamil alphabet and the English alphabet were taught together in the elementary class. The boys were told 'Rise up,' 'Sit down,' 'Take your slates,' etc., in English, from the first day they entered the school. And children, as soon as they learned a word or two, would practise them most diligently, and would shout 'Good morning, sir,' most confidently to the missionary whenever they met him on the street.

How different everything was from the village school in which I had been wasting so much of my time!

A native inspector visited the school two or three times in the course of the year, and a grand and searching annual examination was held by the European

inspector himself. We had to work with great diligence to master the portions of study prescribed by Government. The annual Government grant was in proportion to the salary and qualifications of the teachers, but was liable to be withdrawn or reduced if the examinations should be unsatisfactory.

Mr. Knox was a strict disciplinarian, and sought by every means in his power to raise and purify the moral tone of the school. Though strict, he was singularly just and reasonable; he was always ready to listen candidly to anything that might be urged in extenuation of a fault, or against his own opinion, and he never punished capriciously; yet he never uttered a threat without carrying it out; so that, although we feared him, we loved and trusted him too.

One day the theft of some school books was traced to a lazy, sulky Christian boy in the highest class. The masters wished to settle the matter without telling the missionary, but while they were in the midst of the investigation he entered.

'What is the matter?' he asked.

'For some time back,' said the head-master, 'some of the boys have been losing their books, and we have found out at last that this boy, Shaedrack, has been stealing them. We are trying to make him confess.'

'Are you sure that it is he who took them?'

'There is no doubt about it whatever. We can easily prove it.'

After listening to the evidence which the head-master stated to him, Mr. Knox's lips pressed close together, and his face became terribly stern as he looked at the

Christian boy, who stood trembling, with his eyes on the ground.

'Did you steal the books?'

'No.'

'If you are guilty you had better confess; for if you don't, I will at once call a policeman, and make a charge against you. Your crime is sure to be proved, and then your punishment will be very severe. Acknowledge your fault, and you will not suffer so much.'

After a little hesitation, the boy, in a low tone, uttered one word.

'What does he say?' asked the missionary.

'He says that he confesses,' replied the head-master.

'Call all the boys.'

Gradually all the boys, with inquisitive, unsympathetic looks, gathered round the culprit and his examiners.

'You have been guilty of two faults,' said the missionary; 'first of stealing, then of lying. You are a Christian, and have brought disgrace on your religion before the whole school. Give him,' said he, turning to the head-master, 'twelve cuts on the hand, and dismiss him from the school.'

After the whipping was inflicted, and the boy sent away, I heard the head-master say to Mr. Knox—

'I think, sir, the punishment was too severe.'

'Why?'

'Because many are guilty of the same faults.'

'Don't you punish them?'

'We may give them a caning for stealing, but not for telling lies.'

'Why not?'

'We could not do that, because we all, masters as well as scholars, tell lies.'

At another time it was discovered that the best books in the school library had been taken away.

'The whole school,' said Mr. Knox, 'must suffer. The books have no doubt been stolen by some schoolboy. If the others chose, they could easily prevent or discover such crimes. Every one must pay a fine to make up the value of the books.'

At this the boys looked at one another, and grumbles were heard.

'What are you saying?' said the missionary, addressing a slim, vain youth, who was ever ready to give his opinion, and who had muttered something.

'We do not think it will be just to make the innocent suffer for the guilty,' said he.

'Your ideas of justice, and mine,' replied Mr. Knox, 'don't exactly coincide. Which must I follow—your sense of what is just, or you mine?'

'Of course we must follow yours,' said the teacher.

'The whole school is implicated,' continued the missionary, 'because, unless the boys winked at the offence, it would not have occurred. Many of the boys who did not steal the books, no doubt thought those very lucky who did. Is it not so?'

'Yes, sir; that is true,' said the head-master.

'It is only by being made to suffer,' continued the missionary, 'that a conviction that such acts are wrong can be impressed on the minds of the boys. I believe in vicarious suffering, and although I am innocent, I

shall willingly share the punishment by joining you in paying the fine.'

Although we resisted the influence of the religious instruction that we received as much as we could, tried not to listen, carried on a debate in our minds in defence of Hinduism, hoped that strong arguments must surely exist, although we could not discover them, still, a deep impression was made on our minds. We were convinced in spite of ourselves of a great deal that our teacher taught us.

When I told my father about the Scripture lesson, he told me that it could not do me any harm, if I always remembered that He whom the Christians called God or Christ was really Sivan; that the difference between Christianity and Hinduism was only a difference in name. 'If they say anything against Hinduism, say "Yes, yes"; but you need not believe.' After that I used to listen gladly whenever the teacher spoke about God; but I was displeased whenever he mentioned the name of Christ, because I knew that Christ was a distinct person, and could not be regarded as identical with any of the Hindu gods.

The teacher was very discreet and cautious. He made as little reference to Christ as possible, and tried, by illustrations and by stories of good men, to awaken within us an admiration for goodness, and a sense of our need of a Saviour.

When I made known to the teacher who I was, and reminded him of the incident that occurred on the occasion when I first met him, he smiled and seemed greatly pleased.

'I have often thought about you,' he said, 'and wished to meet you again; and although I did not recognise you, —you remember it was in the middle of the night that I first made your acquaintance, so that I did not get a proper look at your face—I thought I remembered your voice when I heard it in the class. Who are you living with in Coimbatore?'

'My father has left Poothoor, and is living here now.'

'You must come and see me in my house. I live in the mission compound. I should like much to have a talk with you.'

I took an early opportunity of paying my respects to my teacher in his own house.

The mission compound is a strip of land, about a furlong in length, not far from the native town, and near the houses of the Europeans. At one end is the church, at the other a boarding-school for girls, and midway between the house of the missionary.

The teacher's house was very neat and clean. Some books were arranged on a set of shelves, and some pictures were nailed on the whitewashed walls.

'Sit down,' he said, offering me a chair. There was only one chair in my father's house, and in Poothoor we had none at all.

We talked of many things, and at length our conversation turned to religion.

'I observe that you are very attentive in the class. Do you read the Bible at home?'

'Sometimes I do, but——'

'You don't believe much of it, I suppose.'

'It contains good morals,' I said; 'but I don't like to leave my own religion.'

'Do you worship the idols?'

'No, I don't. I believe that God is a Spirit, and I think of Him in my heart.'

'Do you pray to Him?'

'I have not learned any except the Sanscrit prayers that the guru taught me, and I don't understand their meaning.'

'Has your father not taught you how to pray?'

'No. Once when I saw him bathing in the tank, and muttering his devotions, I asked him what he said. He told me that it would be a great sin for him to tell me, and that if I were to overhear him uttering them I should become a deaf serpent in the next birth.'

The teacher laughed, and said, 'We Christians don't hide our prayers like that. We teach them to our wives and children, and we don't mutter senseless words, but ask what we need from God.'

'We, too,' I said, 'ask what we need. If we wish education we ask the goddess of learning to bless our studies.'

'You don't pray from the heart,' said the teacher. 'You pay a priest to teach you.'

'It is well to receive instruction from the learned,' I replied.

'It is only to get money,' said the teacher. 'The priests refuse to teach poor low-caste people. They say that low-caste people ought not to read or be taught the Vedas. Is that right? But would you like to speak to God?'

'I should like to do so,' I said, 'but how can I speak to Him?'

'You can speak to Him by prayer. We Christians daily speak to Him in this way. He kindly listens to our prayers, and gives us what is right. Consider God as your Father, and ask Him for whatever you need.'

After some further talk with my kind teacher, I took leave of him, and promised to come often to see him.

CHAPTER X.

MATRIMONIAL NEGOTIATIONS—LOVE AND MARRIAGE.

It being usual for Hindus to marry, if possible, only among relatives, my father said to my aunt one day—

'My son is now thirteen years old. It is time that he should be married, and I know no one more suitable for him than your daughter.'

'There is no one,' said my aunt, 'who has a better right to give a wife to your son than I. Your son and my daughter would make a good couple.'

'When your husband comes, speak to him about it,' said my father.

'Your brother-in-law asks our second child, Balambal, in marriage for his son,' said my aunt, to her husband that evening. 'They will be like a god and a goddess. What do you say?'

'A capital match!' said he, ironically. 'Give our daughter to a motherless son? Is she so old that she must seek a husband? She knows nothing about marriage. She has not reached her tenth year. Were Coopooswamey's father suddenly to close his eye (in death), Coopooswamey would be destitute. It is very

likely that a stepmother will give her wealth to a stepson! What, you stupid! Hold your tongue! Don't shove your daughter into an old well .We married one, and see the miserable state she is in now.'

My aunt stood patiently listening to this outburst. Knowing his disposition, she felt that the only way to avoid a quarrel was to let him talk, without contradiction. She did not allude to the subject again, but induced my grandmother to talk to him.

One day about this time my grandmother said jocularly to Balambal, 'Who are you going to marry?'

'My cousin,' said she, smiling.

Hearing this, two or three people who were on the verandah with her laughed. I was in the upstair room, and through the open window heard both the question and the reply.

'Is it a girl like you that I am to marry?' said I, coming down, and speaking with boyish rudeness.

'If that is what you say, why did you so earnestly play at marriage with me the other day, and tie a shell round my neck as a tali. All my friends saw you do it,' she said.

My real feelings thus discovered, the warm blood rushed to my face, and hanging down my head I went away without a word.

My father did not speak to me about the marriage that he was negotiating for me. It is not usual for Hindu parents to consult their children on these matters, or to allow a son the right of choice in the selection of his bride, or a daughter the privilege of refusal. The bride and bridegroom usually acquiesce in the decision

of their parents. They, indeed, can hardly do otherwise, because at the time of their marriage they are often mere children; and although in some cases old enough to understand the meaning and importance of marriage, and to form those opinions and attachments that link young men and maidens to each other, they have probably had no opportunity of seeing and speaking to each other. For a young man to look at or speak to a girl, with a view to winning her affection, would be considered the height of impropriety.

Besides, a young man at the time of his marriage is rarely in a position to maintain himself, and although married his position in his father's house is little changed, his bride being received as a daughter, and sharing the common life of the family.

My own marriage was in some respects different from the ordinary type. Balambal and I had had frequent opportunities of seeing each other. We had been allowed to grow up together like brother and sister, and, boy though I was, I had set my affections on her. I early perceived that she was superior to any girl that I had ever seen. It was not merely that her skin was fairer and her features more regular, softer, and more beautiful than those of other girls, but she was so kind, so wise, so clever, we all admired her, and I loved her. I vowed that none but Balambal should be my wife.

Although my father told me nothing of what was going on, I was in the confidence of my aunt.

In order to make the formal proposal to my uncle that his daughter Balambal should be espoused to me

my father invited a number of the relatives of both families to a feast.

Veeran was there, and the young postmaster from Poothoor. They had come the night before, and were both staying in our house. Veeran was dressed simply as a cultivator with a white turban, a white cloth thrown over his naked shoulders, and a similar cloth tied round his loins. The postmaster had puffy cheeks and bad teeth, that were black with the betel which he chewed. He wore a white flannel jacket edged with black, and his feet were protected by yellow shoes with pointed upturned toes, and folded-down heels.

The first guest who came was an old man, with well-marked massive features and a gruff voice. His moustache and eyebrows were pure white. He had been head clerk in the collector's office, but was living retired on a pension, and on the gains which, in various ways, he had made when in office. He wore the long thin flowing cotton cloth coat that all Government officials affect, a small diamond earring twinkled in each ear, and the little finger of his left hand was adorned by a large ring glittering with a cluster of diamonds.

Slipping off his shoes on the outside of the threshold, he came in bowing and salaaming, and with a smile on his old rugged face.

'Come in, come in,' said my father, who had risen and stepped forward to welcome him. 'I hope you are well, your presence is an honour to my house. You bring good luck, for you are the first that has come.'

'Am I the first? If I bring as much good luck as I wish you, your feast will be successful indeed.'

After the guests, to the number of thirty, had all arrived, they laid aside their turbans and upper cloths and jackets, and with no covering, save the cloth about the loins, sat down, cross-legged, in a row on the mats placed for them in the hall.

In front of each was a round plate made of fresh leaves sewn together.

My aunt and my stepmother, assisted by two female servants, waited on the guests, but did not take food along with them. Men and women never eat together. The women first serve the men and take their food by themselves afterwards.

A large black earthenware pot of rice was brought in, and a heap of the beautiful, nicely-cooked grain was placed on each leaf plate. On the top of this a ladleful of curry was poured, and a pot of a boiled grain called dholl, and over all was poured some ghee, or clarified butter. The curry consisted of mutton cut in small pieces and stewed in ghee with a large number of spices.

In addition to the dholl and ghee a little chutney was placed on the side of each plate.

All this while not a word had been spoken; each one watched silently and solemnly the serving out of the food by the lithe, handsome, active women. At length, when every one had been served, my uncle, looking towards my father, asked permission to eat, to which my father replied, 'Eat, eat.' Each one then leaning over his food, mixed a portion with his thumb and three fingers, raised and thrust it dexterously into his mouth.

The meal proceeded in perfect silence, and not till the close did any one drink water.

In drinking, no one allowed his brass drinking vessel to touch his lips. Throwing their heads back, opening their mouths wide, and raising their hand aloft, they poured the water in a stream down their throats.

Those who do not understand our Hindu customs may be apt to suppose that sitting on the floor, and having our food served on leaf plates, and eating with our fingers is a sign of barbarism. Far from this, it in reality indicates refinement and delicate fastidiousness. To a Hindu the saliva is impure, and everything it touches is defiled. A plate, therefore, or a knife or fork or spoon that has once touched the lips, could not be used again. The very ground where food has been partaken has to be purified after each meal, by having a little liquid cow-dung sprinkled over it.

A Hindu never spits inside a house. He rises and goes outside to do so. He never moistens a postage stamp with his tongue, but keeps a pot of gum beside him for the purpose. He cuts a fresh twig every morning, chews it soft at the end, and cleans his teeth with it, and then throws it away.

After every one had partaken to his heart's content of the savoury viands, a brass vessel containing sandal-wood paste was handed round; each one dipped his hand into it and smeared it over his arms and breast. It imparted a delightful feeling of coolness to the skin, and shed a pleasant fragrance through the hall. Flowers were given to each to fasten in his hair, and then they all rose and went outside to wash the right hand, which they had taken their food with. Then they gathered in a corner of the hall to chew betel and talk.

'Come along, old man,' said Veeran to one who was slower in his movements than the others, and therefore the last to seat himself.

'Old man! is that what you call me? Ah well! my hair is getting white; I am not so young as I once was,' said the old man, good-humouredly.

'Without the wisdom of the old,' said the postmaster, 'what can we do? Without the head, the tail won't wag. Have some betel nut.'

'Thanks, I have no teeth,' said the old man.

'Well, here are some flowers,' said Veeran.

'Ah, you joke me; I have no hair to put flowers in,' said the other, touching the meagre tuft forming his kudami.

'What are you going to do then—nothing?'

'Although I can't chew betel, I can talk. How is your son?' said he, turning to a man not quite so old as himself, who was sitting next him. 'I hear he has passed his examination at the university.'

'Yes,' replied the other. 'By the gods' favour, he has been so far successful. He has been at home for more than a month now.'

'Has he got any employment?'

'No, he is quiet at home. He says that he is entitled to a post from Government, but, without favour, how can he get that? He is idle and discontented. He seems far from happy.'

'The world,' said the other, sententiously, 'is divided between the busy and the idle. The busy fail to enjoy life from excess of drudgery, anxiety, and worry; the idle still more from satiety and *ennui*. I fear that happiness is very rare.'

'What is that you are saying about happiness?' said Veeran. 'My idea of happiness is plenty to eat, nothing to do, and a wife that does not bother you with her tongue.'

'You know what pleasure is,' said Boyan. 'I heard that your wife once gave you a love philtre, and that you are now as fond of each other as two doves.'

There was a laugh at this, and all eyes were turned on Veeran, who looked very stupid, and did not speak again for a while.

At length my father cleared his throat. 'My son,' said he, 'is now thirteen years old, and it is high time he should be married. If, by the favour of the god, we can get a girl for him among our relatives, it will be well. I think if my brother-in-law would agree to give his daughter, a better match could not be made.'

Just then a puff of wind blew out the light, and left them in darkness.

'We need not talk any more of this matter,' cried my uncle. 'If I give my daughter, as the light has gone out, so will it be with her. It is not a good omen.' He rose as he said this, and went hastily away.

At the door a married woman, bearing a pot of water, met him, and a dog that was lying near flapped its ears. He went home in perplexity.

These omens were good—the woman and the dog; nothing could be better; and yet how could he renew a matter like this, that had once been broken off?

'But if I reject the good omens it will be like pushing luck away with my foot,' thought he, as he turned the matter over in his mind.

About this time I was asked to accompany my aunt and Balambal to Peroor, to see the god floated on the tank. The ceremony was to take place at night, so we set off in the evening in a bullock cart. Many people were flocking to the same place, some, like ourselves, in carts, but most on foot.

The scene at Peroor was an animated one. The temple and the tank were lighted up, and many of the people carried torches and firebrands. The god was brought out, carried in procession round the temple, and then placed on a raft on the tank.

By keeping close to the idol, we were fortunate enough to obtain a place on the raft.

It was floated thrice round the shrine in the middle of the tank; then it was lifted out, placed in the shrine, and the lighted camphor, cocoanuts, and other fruits and money that we gave to the priest, were spread out before it.

The god was then placed again on the raft, and we were slowly pushed towards the bank. Before we reached the steps the raft dipped to one side, and we were all thrown into the water; but as we were near the steps, where the water was not very deep, we all managed to scramble out.

The people pushed and jostled one another to get a little of the fruit and other things that had been presented to the idol, and which the priests were scattering among the people.

Some of the women, in the hope of obtaining offspring, bathed in the tank, and then in their wet garments rolled on the ground round the temple—a most painful sight!

Instead of returning to Coimbatore, we went to pass the remainder of the night in the house of a friend.

While going thither, we saw a man covered with ashes sitting by the wayside, having in front of him three women with dishevelled hair, whose heads were constantly moving from side to side.

'What is that man doing?' I asked my aunt.

'He is a devil driver,' she replied; 'and these poor women are possessed by evil spirits.'

Suddenly a woman bounded forwards, and sat down before him. He gave her a good lashing with the cane, and kicked her well. The woman roared, and turned her head from side to side. Other women also sprang forward and were beaten in the same way, and as they were beaten they cried, 'I am going! I am going!'

'That,' said my aunt, 'is the evil spirit within them who is shouting.'

A little farther on we met a man with his face blackened with charcoal. His whole appearance was frightful, and he was dancing, prancing, and moving his arms and head wildly about. He danced in this excited manner up to my aunt, who put some money into my hand to give to him. I shrank away from him, and threw the money to him on the ground. He was supposed to be possessed by the god.

When we reached the house where we were to stay, Balambal and I went inside, but my aunt, being ceremonially unclean, had to remain without, and spend the night in a small shed.

'Serve rice to these two young people as soon as you can,' said my aunt to one of the female servants.

'It is late—long past the time when they usually take their food. They ought to have been asleep long ago.'

'Rice will be put for them in a minute or two,' said the servant. 'Go and wash your hands,' said she to us. 'Pour some water on your feet and ankles. Here is a brass vessel. Come quickly.'

She then went and spread a leaf for me, and put two handfuls of rice and a ladleful of curry on it. The curry was so hot with spices that I could not eat it.

'Why don't you take your rice? Is there anything the matter?' asked the servant.

'It is too hot. Give me a little more ghee.'

She then poured so much ghee on my leaf that all the curry and the rice were soaked with it.

'What is wrong now?' she exclaimed, seeing me playing with my food rather than eating it.

'The ghee is getting hard,' I said. 'Please pour a little of the soup over it.'

She added so much soup that it was out of all proportion to the quantity of rice; and when I sat wondering how I was to consume so much soup, it occurred to me that I might add some more rice to it, and when I did so the rice on my leaf amounted to as much as would be sufficient for two men.

'What am I to do with all this rice?' exclaimed I in despair.

'Eat as much as you can, and leave the rest,' said the servant.

'But won't it be wrong to waste so much food?' I asked.

'No,' she replied. 'It can be thrown to the dog. To feed the dog is a work of merit.'

After our supper was over, she took Balambal and me to a room where there was no one but a little girl sleeping in a corner. Spreading a grass mat on one side for me, and one on the other side for Balambal, she bade us lie down and go to sleep. All the other rooms in the house were occupied, and the people were all asleep.

'I am not sleepy,' said I to the servant. 'Is there no story you can tell us?'

'What story have I got to tell? It is late. I wish to go and lie down.'

'Tell us only one short story,' said I, urging her.

'Very well then, listen. Once upon a time, there was a city called Ahagapany, governed by King Ahasuran, who had one Patti for his prime minister. This king governed the city with so much firmness, justice, and kindness that even the tiger and the sheep became so friendly that they would drink water together from the same spring.

'One day, reflecting on his sad condition in having no son to succeed him on the throne, he fell into the greatest melancholy, and thought that it would be better to die than live in the world as a childless man.

'What is the use of my telling a story to you when you neither nod your head nor give a sound to encourage me as I go along?' said the servant. The truth is, I had been thinking what I would say to Balambal after the story was finished and the servant gone away.

'Go on,' said Balambal. 'I will make the "Hu" sound to show that we are listening.'

'No,' said I, 'that is my part.'

'If you are going to quarrel,' said the servant, 'I won't tell you any more.'

'We are not going to quarrel,' I replied. 'Go on with the story.'

'Tell me where I left off, then.'

As I had not been listening very attentively, I looked confused, and could not tell her.

Balambal at once gave the last word, and I, much ashamed, sat mute.

The servant went on again thus:

'The king lived for many years in this unhappy mood. He had sixty-four wives, of whom the first was his legal and proper wife. Each of the sixty-three asked him to tell them the cause of his melancholy. He refused to tell any of them, but when his lawful wife asked him he promised to tell her next day.

'When, with great sorrow, he opened his mind to her, she became very sad, and said—

'"It must be on account of some sin committed in a former birth. What can we do but go to the great god Sivan, and tell him our grief? Perhaps he will take pity on us."

'The king thanked his wife for her good advice, and immediately set about making preparations. He invited to his palace Brahmins and men learned in the Vedas; feasted them, sang sacred songs, prayed to all the gods without exception, fasted, and went on pilgrimage to the Ganges.

'At length, one night, at twelve o'clock, Sivan, with his wife, Parvathi, seated side by side on a bullock, appeared to him and to his wife, and informed them

THE GOD SIVAN.

that in a former birth they had both been guilty of infanticide.

'When the king and queen heard this, they fell at the

feet of the god and goddess, and asked forgiveness for their sin. Sivan immediately granted their request, and vanished from their sight.

'Soon their hearts were gladdened by the birth of a son.

'They brought up the child with great tenderness, indulging him in every way, and educating him in all the knowledge and accomplishments befitting a king.

'When he had reached a marriageable age, his father proposed to the queen that a wife should be sought for him. The queen remarking that there was nothing more important, and few things more difficult to find than a good wife for one's son, agreed to her husband's proposal.

'The young prince's portrait was painted by a skilful artist, and sent by ambassadors to the court of every king in the world.

'In a country four thousand miles away there lived a princess more beautiful than a goddess, and she was finally selected as a bride for the prince.

'Their marriage was celebrated with great pomp and splendour, and was the occasion of much joy throughout the whole country. After they were crowned, they attained to greater glory than their parents, and lived as harmoniously as milk and water.

'It is in this way,' said the servant, 'that parents should bring up their children, and that husbands and wives should love each other.'

Seeing that my eyes were shut, and that I seemed to be asleep, the servant rose, and making salaam to Balambal, slipped away to get her rice.

'Balambal,' said I, in a whisper.

'What is it?' she asked, shyly.

'Are you going to sleep?'

'No, I can't sleep so long as you are here.'

'There is no where else for me to go to.'

'Can't you go and lie down on the verandah outside?'

'Yes, I will do that; but I want to speak to you first. You heard that story. What do you think of it?'

'That story is suitable for you and me,' she replied, laughing.

I also laughed. 'I have been wishing for a long time to have some talk with you.'

'How many words you have already spoken! You don't seem satisfied with speaking a few. Talk, then; I will listen.'

'I tried many times to speak with you, and could not succeed. Whenever you saw me, you ran away.'

'It was not because I did not like to speak with you that I ran away, but because of what others would say. I, also, was very anxious to meet you and talk as we used to do, but, as the proverb says, we must walk as the village walks.'

'Are you glad that my father has asked you for my wife?' I asked.

'I resolved that I would marry no one but you,' she replied.

'You are only a little girl,' said I, pleased and astonished; 'only eleven years of age. Who taught you to make this resolution?'

'Does one need to be taught this? Your good looks and your affection were my instructors—nothing else!'

'The eye can see good looks, but how did you know about my love?' I asked.

'What?' said she. 'I read about love in a book. Love is shown by actions; actions are seen by the eyes.'

'You said that you would like to marry me because I love you. Do you love me, too?'

'When I saw that you loved me, I thought about it, and I was grateful to you. Does not that prove that I love you?'

Drowned in a sea of love and joy, I exclaimed, 'You are very wise and clever! To tell your good qualities, five tongues would not be sufficient!' I then went away, and lay down on the verandah outside, where I was soon fast asleep.

Those were bright and happy days to me. The knowledge of Balambal's love affected me like strong wine. My heart exulted. I walked with an elastic, springing step. I sought lonely places to think of her. She occupied all my thoughts. My companions noticed a change in me, although I did not allow them to suspect the reason. My love for Balambal gave me a feeling of goodwill to every one in the world. My heart throbbed with generous emotions. Everything she did seemed to me perfect. The tones of her voice were music. Her movements in walking were as graceful as a dance.

I dared not be seen speaking to her, but I could see from the movement of her head, and sometimes by the shyest glance of her bright eye, that I was not forgotten. I used to watch her as she went to the well with the other women.

While I was living in this happy ecstacy, I learned that my father had written to Tanjore for another wife for me. After the way my uncle had broken off the negotiations for Balambal, my father thought that there was no use speaking to him again.

I ran in great distress to my aunt.

'I did not tell my father to get a wife for me. Why should he be in such a hurry?' I said.

'Never mind,' she replied; 'I will speak to your father about it. It will all come right yet.'

'What does my father say?' I asked my aunt, a day or two after, when I met her returning from my father's house.

'It is all right,' she replied. 'He will break off the arrangements with the people in Tanjore. I told him that you were not happy, that you were eating no food, and that you could not sleep at night. When he asked the cause, I told him that you did not wish to marry a stranger. I advised him to make the excuse to the people in Tanjore that the horoscope of their daughter, which they had sent, does not suit your horoscope. Tell a thousand lies, I said, and promote a marriage. He agrees to do this, so that all will be right.'

In three weeks after this everything was arranged for my marriage with Balambal.

The first ceremony was the formal and public asking of the bride. Seven married women—not widows—carrying plates filled with flowers, and fruits, and sweetmeats, accompanied by seven men, went in procession to my uncle's house. He met them at the door, and ushered them in with great politeness.

'Wherefore have you come?' inquired my uncle.

'We have come to ask your daughter, Balambal, in marriage for my eldest son,' said my father.

'What are the jewels you are prepared to offer to my daughter?'

'A necklace of gold mohars, a jewel for the upper tip of the ear, a tight-fitting necklace of fine gold wire, a gold bangle for the hand. These fine jewels we have brought as a present for your daughter.'

'Is the bridegroom educated?'

'He is at present studying in the mission school. We hope that he will by-and-by pass his examinations.'

'All right, I agree,' said my uncle; and taking the jewels and clothes that we had brought, he put them on Balambal, and caused her and me to sit side by side in the middle of the assembly.

My father, taking some betel nuts and leaves, and offering them to my uncle, said, 'The bride is mine, the bridegroom is yours.'

My uncle, taking the nuts and leaves, and giving some in return to my father, said, 'Yes, the bridegroom is mine, and the bride yours.'

It would be tedious to describe all the ceremonies that took place at the marriage. A spacious leafy bower or hall was erected, and decorated with bright lamps, and tinsel paper of red and yellow, and blue and gold.

A piece of cow dung, to represent the belly god, was placed in the middle of the room where the marriage ceremony was to take place, and near it two pots tied round with cloth, to represent another famous god and his wife.

After worship had been performed, and gifts offered to these gods, and ghee poured on the fire, the bride's father caused me to clasp Balambal's right hand, and placing some betel leaf and nuts and a silver coin on the top of our hands, he held them all together, and guided them round the pots, saying, 'Upon Siva, upon Parvathi, upon Agni, upon the three hundred and thirty millions of gods, and in the presence of all here present, upon heaven, upon earth, upon everything sacred, I give my daughter in marriage to thee as thy wife.' When the bride's father had said this, the mother poured water on our hands, and thus they gave their daughter to me.

I also repeated the formula, 'Upon Siva, upon Parvathi, etc. I regard this maiden as my wife. I will not be faithless to her. I will never look on the face of another woman. I will not deviate from this sacred promise.'

The wedding garments and gold wedding ornament for the bride were now brought forward on a brass salver, and presented to the oldest man in the assembly for his blessing. He took them, touched them with both his hands, and passed the plate to some one else.

When the salver came round to the Brahmin priest, he handed it to me, and told me to give it to the bride. I did so. The bride's companions then spread out the cloth, and threw it over her. The Brahmin then gave me the gold tali, telling me to tie it round the bride's neck. I did so, and the bride's companions, one by one, also knotted it. Then all the Brahmins present showered their blessings on us in Sanscrit, and the other caste people wished us unbounded prosperity and happiness,

and a life unmixed with cares and sorrows. The bride's companions then took the bride inside and dressed her properly, and bringing her back placed her on my left. Only now was the bride my wife.

The Brahmin told us to love each other like Siva and his wife Parvathi. The bride's companions brought a cup full of milk and plantain fruit, and told the bride to give it to me to taste. I drank a little, and in the same way gave the cup to her to drink.

After this a heap of raw rice along with some grass was placed in a brass salver before the bride. My parents came one after the other, and taking some of the rice and grass in both hands, put them on my knees, shoulders, and head, and then on those of the bride. This ceremony was repeated three times. The bride's parents then did the same, and after them every aged member, male and female, in the assembly.

After this my bride and I stood up, and two women, each with a plate containing a red mixture and a burning wick, stood before us, and raised the plates from our feet to our heads three times. Then they dipped their fingers in the red mixture and marked our foreheads with it. Then the lights were waved again several times in front of us.

The Brahmin then joined the little finger of my left hand with that of my wife's right hand. I followed my companions. My wife came after me with her finger joined to mine, and her companions followed her. In this way we walked three times round the fire, the grindstone, and the marriage pandal or hall, and full pots. The third time I was told to lift up my bride's right foot

with my right hand, and place it on the grindstone. I did so.

We were then shown a star in the sky, and told to behave well, especially the bride.

In the evening we were seated in a gorgeous palanquin, along with a boy and girl, and with music and lights were carried in procession through the town. All our relatives had a light burning before their doors in honour of the occasion.

On our return home we were presented with a cup of milk and plantain fruit, and then were placed in the marriage spot to amuse ourselves by pitching flowers at each other.

On the fourth evening of the feasting and ceremonial, a large quantity of water was poured into a big vessel, and mixed with saffron powder and quicklime to make it red.

Into this vessel a ring and a bangle were thrown, and we were told to get them out. I got out the bangle and my wife got out the ring. Then I took the water in a small vessel, and wetted my wife from top to toe. Others in the company shared in the amusement, and amid much laughter threw the coloured water at each other. We all then went to the tank, with music sounding, and after bathing we were decked with ornaments.

The feast continued for several days longer, during which we received many presents from the bride's parents, and then the festivities came to an end.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ZENANA MISSIONARY VISITS BALAMBAL—A STEPMOTHER—A MOTHER-IN-LAW.

As my bride was still a girl, not yet old enough to live with me as my wife, she returned, as soon as the marriage festivities were over, to her father's house. We had, however, frequent opportunities of seeing and conversing with each other.

Balambal had been attending the Mission Caste Girls' School. Usually when a girl is married she ceases attending school, so that her education is stopped before it has advanced sufficiently far to be a permanent advantage to her. Reading and writing, in many cases not having become sufficiently easy to be a pleasure, are often laid aside and become lost arts after a girl enters on her married life.

My uncle and aunt being sensible people, and perceiving the disadvantage of taking a girl too soon away from school, allowed Balambal to return.

One day while I was staying in my uncle's house, the lady in charge of the girls' school drove up to the house in her carriage. The heat is so great that no Europeans not even the missionaries, walk. All either ride or drive.

Miss Philp had asked permission to visit my aunt and the other women in the house. Balambal was very fond of her, and had often told me what a good, kind lady she was. Her pleasant face was pale with the heat, and her gold-coloured hair was tied at the back and hung down in graceful curls.

Stepping from her phaeton she gave her horse a pat, and came into the house.

'Fetch a chair for the lady,' said my aunt to Balambal.

'Are you Balambal's mother?' Miss Philp asked in a pleasant voice.

'Yes,' said I, in English, wishing to show my ability. 'That is her mother, and that woman pounding rice is a servant. These other women are neighbours that have come in to see you.'

'Oh, you talk English,' she said. 'Are you Balambal's brother?'

'No, I am her husband.'

'Ah, I am very glad you allow your wife to attend school.' Then turning to my aunt: 'Your daughter is very clever; she is one of the brightest girls in the school; I should have been very sorry to lose her.'

'I am very glad,' said my aunt, 'and we are glad to have the honour of your visit.'

The women had by this time drawn a little nearer, and were looking at the English lady with great interest.

'Are you married?' asked one.

'No, I am not,' said Miss Philp with a smile.

The women looked at each other in astonishment.

'In my country all the women don't marry.'

'That is very strange,' said my aunt. 'We think

that every woman should be married, unless she is a widow.'

'What is your age?' asked another woman, an old grandmother with white hair and two protruding upper teeth.

'I am not so young as Balambal, nor so old as you,' said the lady.

'Do you get a large salary?'

'I don't work for money, but from love to God, and from a desire to tell you about Him. I get enough for my necessities.'

'She won't like to be asked these questions,' I said to my aunt. 'English people are different from us.'

'If the lady does not like it, we must not ask them; but we thought she would not be offended. Hindus like to be asked all about their affairs.'

'I am not offended,' said Miss Philp, with a kindly smile. 'I know that your customs are different from mine. Will you allow me to read to you a story out of this book?'

My aunt agreed to this. Some mats were brought and spread; the women sat down, and Miss Philp read the story of the prodigal son. The women were very much pleased with the story. It evidently interested them and touched their hearts.

After they had talked a little about it, I said, 'Christianity is not true.'

'Why do you say that?' asked Miss Philp. 'What reason have you for saying that it is not true?'

'There are many reasons.'

'Well, can you mention one or two?'

'The Bible says that God is a Spirit, and that God made man in His own image.'

'You think that a spirit can't have an image. Have you got a pencil or a piece of chalk?'

'I have a pencil,' said I.

'Well, take a piece of paper. Now draw me a "figure of speech." You can't.'

I was utterly confounded. I did not expect that my objection would be so easily answered.

'What are your other reasons?' she asked.

'It says in the Bible, that after God made the world, He saw that all things were very good. If He were God, why did He not know beforehand that they would be good? Why did He need to see them?'

Miss Philp laughed. 'These objections,' she said, 'are very ingenious. Did you find them out for yourself?'

'No,' I said; 'I heard a Brahmin talking about Christianity?'

'If he has no stronger objections to bring against Christianity than these, you may conclude that Christianity is true. The Bible does not say that God did not know that all things would be good before He made them. What it says is true—that He saw that all things that He had made were very good. I must go now, as I have to visit the school before breakfast. Salaam, salaam.'

All the women rose, accompanied her to the street, and watched her get into her carriage and drive away.

My stepmother was of a cross and miserly disposition, and she had been much displeased at the expense

of my marriage ceremonies and festivities. She did not look forward with any satisfaction to Balambal's coming and staying with us permanently. She therefore received Balambal very sulkily when, owing to my uncle and aunt receiving a sudden and urgent message to go to Madras to see a relative that was very ill and supposed to be dying, their daughter was sent to stay with us till their return.

'Take your food, and be off to school!' my stepmother shouted to Balambal and me in an angry tone, the first morning after Balambal came.

We, as frightened as rats that had seen the cat, went and sat down in the hall.

Spreading an old withered plantain leaf, my stepmother put some cold rice on it, and poured over it a little buttermilk.

'Oho! is this our fate?' said I, putting my fingers in the rice; then, rising, I went off to school.

At one o'clock, on my way home again, I met Balambal at the corner of a street, and joining her, I began to talk about my stepmother's cruelty.

'I will not live with her,' I said; 'I will run away.'

'Will you leave me?' said Balambal.

'No; but I won't stay with her. When I leave school I will get a situation, and earn some money, and you and I can live by ourselves.'

'That would be very nice,' said Balambal; 'but what would the neighbours say?'

'I don't care what they would say. If you live with my stepmother she will kill you, I am sure of that.'

We bought some cakes, and were eating them on the

way. A poor boy, his hair all matted, his body dirty, a small tattered rag round his waist, held out his hand in a cringing manner, and begged us to give him a piece of our cake. 'I have had nothing to eat all day,' he said, 'and I am very hungry.'

I abused him, and ordered him off.

'Don't speak like that,' said Balambal. 'If we become like him, others will speak to us in that way; let us give him some.'

When we reached home, and were waiting for our food, my stepmother said:

'Is this the way your father brought you up? Look at the impudence of the brats. Like a dog leaving its food they ran away.' Then, turning to the servant, she said, 'Don't give them any food.'

We stood amazed, as if a thunderbolt had struck us.

My father came in soon after, and, seeing the confusion, asked what it was all about.

'Your son and daughter-in-law have been sulking all day, and would not take their food,' said my stepmother.

Going into another room, my father called me, and asked me to tell him fully and particularly what had happened.

I said nothing, but, thinking of the evil of having no mother, I stood sobbing bitterly.

'Don't cry,' said my father; 'tell your mind freely.'

I was much afraid, and said, 'I don't know anything about it.'

'Tell Balambal to come,' said my father, with a gesture of impatience.

I went, and, telling my wife that my father wished to speak with her, I narrated what had passed between us.

'Is that all?' she said. 'It won't be difficult to excuse ourselves in some way.'

She then went into the room where my father was. He had thrown off his upper cloth and his turban, and was seated cross-legged on a grass mat. There was a look of angry determination on his face. Balambal stood respectfully before him.

'Have you had your food?' he asked. Balambal was a favourite with him, and as he spoke to her the expression of his face softened, and the tones of his voice became tender.

'I cannot have taken my food, when you yourself, my husband, and my mother-in-law are still without it,' said Balambal, in a gentle, conciliatory manner.

'Have you been to school to-day?'

'Yes; but to-morrow is a holiday.'

'What did you learn to-day?'

'We read a story.'

'What was it?'

'Must I tell you the whole of it?'

'Yes, if you can.'

'There was a king who for a long time had no children, but who at length received from the Almighty the gift of a daughter. He brought her up with such tenderness and love, that her complexion was fresh as a peach, and each day new beauty and grace were added to her person. The king having been so long childless, his daughter was as precious to him as the flower on a tree that blooms but once in a hundred years.

'In order to obtain a suitable husband for her, the king caused her portrait to be painted, and sent to every country. A husband, the only son of a king, and whose mother was bad, was chosen. The marriage was celebrated, and the princess went to her future home.

'Her husband's stepmother, with whom she had to live, was a woman of low origin, as stupid as a donkey, and of a quarrelsome, jealous temper. The princess, who had been brought up like a swan, now found herself like a bird in the hands of the fowler. She patiently and meekly submitted to all the cruel and unreasonable treatment of her mother-in-law. She was like the sugar cane squeezed between the rollers of the mill, and was so overwhelmed with sorrow that she at length resolved to put an end to her life. To add to her distress, her husband took his stepmother's part, and he also began to ill-treat her. The princess, thus oppressed beyond endurance, one day ended her misery by jumping into a well.'

My father, admiring Balambal's cleverness, said, 'You are a capital girl. You have been able to throw your own circumstances into the form of a story.'

'I do not deserve to be praised,' said Balambal. 'If I am clever, it has only made me the victim of jealousy and ill-will. The abuse I have received is like molten lead poured into the ear.'

'I did not know that my wife had been causing you so much uneasiness; but don't be vexed, I will see to it, and make it all right.'

I had been listening outside, and thinking it well to

seize this opportunity, I ran to my father, and said that I also was treated in the same way.

'Begone!' shouted my father. 'You are a downright fool! You have not the sense of a woman. You can be duped by any one.'

Mortified at being spoken to like this, especially before my wife, I ran away with all haste.

My father went to my stepmother, and said, 'O buffalo! why will you not cease showing your evil temper? What! are you possessed? Does the devil need to be driven out?'

'I don't know what you mean,' said his wife. 'You are either offended with me, or you are hungry. It is now meal time. I will spread the plantain leaf.'

'You are talking nonsense,' said my father. 'Answer my question.'

'What do you want me to say? I am innocent, and know nothing. The child is crying. I know not what to do. I wish I were dead!'

'I know you are a talkative woman,' said my father, seeing that he could do little good by reasoning or scolding. 'You had better hold your tongue now.'

'If I am talkative, so are those related to me. You had better hold your peace, too,' said my stepmother, leaving the room.

After this we were not treated so harshly, although there were occasional scenes. My stepmother went about sulky and silent. She was afraid to provoke my father's anger too far, as she knew that he would not hesitate to give her a sound thrashing.

CHAPTER XII.

A HINDU DOCTOR—DEATH—MOURNING—CREMATION.

MY father went to see his farm, and visit his brother at Pollachy, and while there, the weather being wet and cold, he had a severe attack of fever and ague. Instead of remaining quiet in his brother's house till he should be well, he set off for home with the fever strong upon him.

'Oh dear me!' exclaimed my stepmother, when she saw the bullock cart come to the door with my father, too weak to get out. 'How sick you are! Coopooswamey, come and help your father out. He is trembling and cold with ague. What shall we do? What shall we do?'

'I am very sick,' said my father, in a faint voice. 'I can't move; my back, and legs, and arms are all aching.'

Grieved to see him so ill, I helped him to get up, supported him into the house, and laid him down on a mattress on the floor.

'The cold wind blew through the cart all night,' said my father. 'I am worse than I was. I don't think I shall get better.'

'Don't say that,' I replied. 'We will send for the doctor, who will give you good medicine.'

'And I will worship the gods for you,' said my stepmother.

'That's not of much use,' replied my father; 'but you can do as you please. This shivering is very bad.'

The news of my father's illness spread quickly among the neighbours, and many came in to see him. They crowded the little room where he was lying, and talked about his case.

'Run for the astrologer,' said my uncle, who had a few days before returned from Madras, and who had taken Balambal home again. 'We cannot call the doctor till the astrologer tells us whether this is a suitable day to begin a course of medicine.'

I went off at once to the astrologer's house, in the Brahmins' street. He was sitting on the low verandah in front of his house, reading aloud in the singing manner in which Hindus read all poetry, and moving his head backward and forward in time with the reading. He was dressed in pure Hindu fashion, without a jacket. The sacred marks on his brow and arms had been carefully and neatly made, and he wore round his neck a string of sacred beads.

Making a profound obeisance, I stood respectfully a little distance from him.

'What?' he asked, raising his head and looking at me.

'My father has just returned from Pollachy very ill with fever. Will you graciously tell me whether this is a propitious day for commencing to take medicine?'

'I will think and tell you.'

I waited while the astrologer carried on his mental calculation.

'To-morrow he can take medicine, not to-day.'

Thanking him for this information, I made a profound salaam and hastened homewards.

As nothing could be done till next day, my father was simply fed on water in which rice had been boiled. My stepmother went to the temple.

Next day a native physician was called. He was a little man, with a stoop, and a pursed-up mouth. He carried a big stick in his hand, and wore a handkerchief over his bare shoulders and chest, which were smeared with white ashes.

The little man looked at my father's tongue and felt his pulse.

'The fever is very strong. It will be necessary to give medicine at once,' he said.

'I have had no sleep, and I can't eat. The fever has not left me for two days. I am very weak,' said my father.

'Here is a list of the medicines that will be needed,' said the doctor, unfolding a paper. 'The whole amounts to twenty-five rupees (£2). I have a powder with me that will require to be mixed with these medicines; the cost of the powder is only five rupees' (eight shillings).

'Must I pay all this money at once? or can I give it to you afterwards?' inquired my stepmother.

'Any payment that you may make afterwards will be acceptable,' said the doctor, in a dry manner; 'but I can do nothing till the sum I have mentioned is paid.

How can I buy the medicines unless you give me the money to buy them with?'

'Please take twenty rupees; I will pay the rest afterwards.'

'The sum I need is so small,' said the doctor, 'it is not worth while breaking it. We must not eat half, and leave half of the same mouthful. Give thirty rupees and I will make up the medicine. I cannot procure the drugs for a less sum.'

'Coopooswamey,' said my stepmother to me, 'fetch me the key of the money-box. It is tied to the chair at your father's side.'

I brought the key. My stepmother got the money, and with great and manifest reluctance paid it to the doctor. She knew that he was telling lies about the price of the medicines, but she also knew that he would not do anything for the sick man until this large sum were paid. She seemed, as she slowly counted out each coin, to be saying in her mind, 'My beloved rupee! How can I endure the pain of parting with thee?'

The physician took the money and went away. Two hours afterwards he returned with four medicinal balls, which he said were to be taken in the course of the day.

Having received the thirty rupees, his haughtiness increased; he walked with a consequential air, and looked sideways at us all.

After taking the medicine my father became worse. The cold stage came on so violently that he seemed as if about to go into a fit. I ran to call the doctor

again, but he refused to come. 'I have business now,' he said. 'I will call in the evening.'

The medicine which my father had taken caused him great agony, and brought on unconsciousness. All in the room expected him to die.

One by one, we each put a few drops of milk in his mouth.

'This is from your sister,' said my aunt, with a choked voice and streaming eyes.

'This is from your brother,' said my uncle, who had that morning come, at our urgent request, from Pollachy.

'This is from your son,' said I, with crushed feelings and trembling knees, as I put a drop of milk in his mouth. It was very solemn. I felt as if taking a last farewell, and that the next service I should have to perform for my dear father would be to put the lighted torch to his funeral pyre.

My father, awaking out of unconsciousness, and seeing our distress and excitement, called his wife to him. She came and leaned over him to hear what he wished to say.

'I have not long to live,' he said; 'I married you, and I have protected you. Be careful after I am gone not to bring any disgrace on me. Alas! what will become of my children?' cried he, bursting into tears and burying his face in the pillow. 'Don't be unkind to them.'

I went again for the physician, but he was very saucy. 'What a great deal of trouble you give!' he said; 'I went before, and they were very unwilling to pay me: they have no mind to part with their money.'

When I reached home and told what the doctor said, my stepmother asked my uncle to go and call him.

'Tell him,' she said, 'that we will give him anything that he asks.'

This was just what the greedy, selfish physician wanted.

He came, felt my father's pulse, and said that he would not give any more medicine unless fifty rupees were first paid.

He received the money and gave my father a pill. My father died next morning at seven o'clock.

As soon as we saw what had occurred we all beat our breasts, crying out together, 'Alas! he is gone, Alas! he is gone!'

The men then went outside, and the women, forming a circle with their arms on each other's necks, bowed their heads and mourned together, weeping bitterly and chanting a dirge. Neighbour women came, some with plates of betel leaf, betel nuts, and tobacco, others with flowers, others with sandal-wood paste; and each one embracing my stepmother, bewailed with her. She did not seem to be very greatly distressed, for, after making a show of weeping and lamenting, she went into her room.

My father's concubine came with her two daughters and her son, and lamenting and weeping bitterly, embraced the corpse.

We were all surprised to see this woman mourning over the dead so bitterly, while the proper wife sat so calm beside the dead body. The concubine embraced me, and clasped me close in her arms, as I sat with the tears running down my cheeks and constantly blowing my nose. With much grief and emotion she exclaimed, 'Alas! it is our sad fate. You are left an orphan. You have now none but God to depend on.'

My father's death was my first real sorrow. While he was alive his thoughtfulness and tenderness seemed to me so much a matter of course that I did not value them or think it necessary to be grateful for them; but now that they were gone for ever, I felt their worth for the first time.

Oh! how I wished that he could return to me for one hour, that I might tell him how much I loved him, and how eagerly I desired to show him my gratitude!

There is something sweet and tender in sorrow for the loss of a dear friend, whose love has become precious to us by his loss, and whose virtues appear enhanced and illuminated as we gaze on them through our tears.

My uncle and aunt were greatly distressed.

'I have lost my right hand!' exclaimed my uncle. 'He helped me in so many ways! What good will it be to me to live after you are gone? God has taken you away without the least mercy.'

A crowd filled the house, and every one lamented in his own way. Some spoke of his virtues, some of his generosity, some of his nobleness of character, some of the riches of his knowledge, and some of his obliging disposition.

'What is the use of brooding over the past and spending the time in wailing?' said the old family priest, in a loud voice. 'Make arrangements for the ceremonies; and get the body taken out of the house, or it will be too late. What a misfortune it is that the death has taken place to-day. If he had only lived till to-morrow!'

We must wait till his wife's mother comes. She is

in Peroor. We have sent for her. She will come soon,' said my uncle.

'It will be madness to wait for any one,' exclaimed the priest. 'Will the old woman raise the dead? In a short time the star Goolican will appear, and then you won't be able to take away the corpse.'

'Go on with the preparations,' said my uncle. 'We can't wait for the old woman.'

My stepmother and my youngest sister at once set off to the tank to bathe, and bring water to wash the body. On the way from the tank they wept and bewailed aloud. My stepmother sat down beside the corpse, and water was poured over them both.

Some rice was put in a pot on the fire, and my stepmother took a stick and stirred it rapidly. This was to see whether her married life had been pure. If the rice, while she stirred it, were to come over the edge of the pot, she would be considered pure.

She stirred and stirred vigorously. The rice moved round and round in the pot, but none came out. She threw down the stick in a rage.

The people looked at one another.

'She does not mourn for him very much,' said one to another, in a low tone.

'She was very cruel to his children,' said the other.

'You cannot trust a woman. She must be well watched, and even then she will cheat you,' said my uncle, from Pollachy.

Some of the neighbour widows now stepped up to my stepmother, who was standing sulkily aside with her chin on her breast. They untied the string to which the

marriage ornament was fastened to her neck. The newly made widow quietly allowed them to do this, and then, with a loud cry, threw herself on the ground. The old woman, her mother, came in and embraced her daughter, and then threw herself, weeping, on the corpse.

Her old husband, who came in with her, clasped his arms round his daughter, and cried a mourning hymn. 'Have you departed from us for ever? Alas! you have left your family in a helpless state! What shall I do? I have not drawn from you all the money you owed me!'

The body having now been washed, sacred ashes were rubbed on its forehead, its mouth was filled with rice, and it was wrapped in a new cloth.

As my father had died on a Thursday, his spirit, it was supposed, would haunt the spot for six months. The dead body was put on a bier, sitting upright, with its face exposed; but it was not taken out by the door, as the spirit would in that case easily enter the house again. A hole was broken in the wall, and as soon as the body had passed through to the outside the hole was quickly filled up again.

As the procession proceeded to the burning-place, one of the women cried out—

'What a wonder man's life is! Can he possibly die? Is he to be borne to the grave, and placed on the funeral pile? What! A man whom we saw last week riding through. Does he now move towards the grave? What a wonder! It is like a strong green tree felled down. How many there are who, being puffed up with pride and avarice, speak and act as if they were destined to live till the destruction of the world. It is all madness!'

CHAPTER XIII.

A HAUNTED HOUSE—MISERY—I GAIN A SITUATION.

AFTER the funeral ceremonies were over we did not return to our own house, but went to one at the other end of the street that had been secured for us. My father having died on an unlucky day, it was supposed that his spirit would haunt the house for some time. The removal cost us little trouble, because, with the exception of a couple of boxes with clothes and jewels, a few brass vessels, and some cooking utensils, we had, like most Hindus, very little furniture. The change of abode was beneficial in many ways. Our new surroundings occupied and diverted our minds, and we were spared the anguish of having the painful events of the previous days kept vividly before our minds by association with the spots where they occurred. We did not see the place where my father used to sleep, where he took his food, where he smoked and chewed betel, where he washed his feet and cleaned his teeth, and above all, where he spent his last painful hours. We had indeed lost him, but we became more quickly resigned to his loss, and we felt it less keenly because we were away from so much that could suggest him to our mind.

A live chicken was tied to one of the wooden pillars of the supposed haunted house, and left to die of starvation. I went frequently, and, looking through the wooden bars of the window, watched its struggles. It lingered on for fourteen days and then lay quite still. Had it died sooner, this would have been regarded as a sign that the spirit was present and had drunk its blood, and another chicken would have been put in its place. As the bird had slowly lingered, and had evidently died of starvation, we concluded that the ghost of my father had gone, and would no more haunt the house.

Six months were allowed to pass, and then a man who had the power of becoming possessed by an evil spirit was consulted, who assured my step-mother that she might return to the house. A goat was sacrificed, a feast held, and certain other ceremonies performed, and my mother-in-law with her children went back to her former home. I, however, was destined never to enter it again.

The few months that I lived with my stepmother after my father's death were the unhappiest of my life.

She was a woman of a violent, unreasonable, capricious temper. Although able to converse in a lively, agreeable manner with her friends outside, she had little but sharp and bitter words for me and for her dependants. How unreasonable a woman in a rage can be, I had daily experience. So uncertain was her temper, that I felt in her presence as if she were a tiger or a serpent. Her very look gave me a catching of breath, and a spasm of indigestion. Ah! if men and women —women especially—would only consider how bright

and happy they could make the life of all around them by cheerfulness and kindliness, surely many of them would try more than they do to control their bad temper, and cultivate good humour.

My stepmother had taken such an ill-will to me, that she found fault with everything that I did. If I chatted in a cheerful manner, she would call me a fool that was always talking, and if I sat silent, she would ask what I was sulking at.

I usually tried to keep out of her way, and if it had not been for the counsels of Balambal and my kind friend the Scripture-teacher, I should have run away from home and lived by begging.

My uncle and aunt did not know how harshly and unreasonably my stepmother behaved in her own house, because she was always fair and pleasant to them ; so, when at this time they had to go on business to Madura for a few weeks, they sent Balambal to stay with my stepmother.

'You will have to live with her altogether, soon,' said her mother to her ; 'and it will be well to learn beforehand a little of your future life.'

My uncle and aunt came to see my stepmother before they left, and spoke some comforting and consolatory words to her.

'It is of little use to be sad,' said my aunt. 'We must all die some day. Your husband died first, and we must follow him. Your grief will gradually subside at the sight of your children. I hope that you will take care of Coopooswamey and treat him kindly.'

'Coopooswamey is a disobedient, troublesome fellow,'

said my stepmother. 'If he is to stay with me, he will need some man to look after him and keep him in order, for I can't.'

'What! Is it true?' said my aunt. 'I can't believe it. He has always been a good, sensible boy. If what you say is the case, he must surely have fallen into bad company. I will advise him.' Then, turning to me, she embraced me with tears, and said, 'Commit yourself to the god's care, as you are now fatherless at this stage of your life.'

The word 'father' caused tears of sorrow to roll down my cheeks in torrents. Balambal, too, who was present, wept bitterly.

My aunt held me fast in her arms as she wept and consoled me. 'Don't be afraid of anything,' said she. 'My husband and I will be father and mother to you, and the god will protect you. Be patient while we are away; it won't be long.'

Thus left behind, Balambal and I remained with my stepmother as tame as a serpent in a cage. She soon broke out like a termagant, abusing Balambal. Her little naked child was sitting and rolling about on the front verandah, eating a sweet rice cake, when an impudent crow hopped forward, and deliberately plucked the whole of the cake out of the child's hand. The child roared, and its mother came rushing out.

'Thou! what hast thou done to the child? Art not thou born to bring ruin wherever thou goest? Alas! not a year has elapsed since thou set thy foot on this threshold. Now, behold! thou hast swallowed up thy father-in-law. I don't know whom else thou art to

devour. No sooner didst thou enter the house than the goddess of fortune departed.'

'Madam,' cried Balambal, 'I am innocent. It was a crow that snatched away the cake from the child's hand.'

'Where were you then?'

'I was here.'

'And couldst thou not see to it then? Thou art a hypocrite, I know. Ah, a rogue! It is very fine to say a crow did it.'

A day or two after this scene, which took place in the open street, in the presence of many of the neighbours and passers-by, I was in haste to go to school, and asked the servant to give me my food quickly. My stepmother hearing me, shouted, 'What authority! Serve his food at your convenience. This sort of thing will not do here.'

The servant said to me, 'Food is ready, but I cannot give it to you now.'

I told the servant that I was very hungry, and late for school. My stepmother shouted to the servant to go on with her work, and not talk to a childish fellow like me.

I was packing up my books in a rage, to go off without food, when Balambal prevented me, and running to the servant begged her, with all humility and gentleness, to get permission from the lady to give us food.

The servant made a joke of this, and said, 'What! Do you speak with your husband? Have you both begun to converse so early? You are a fine girl!'

'What if I do speak to him?' said Balambal. 'I

agreed to marry him before this, and now I talk with him. If young people learn to talk with each other, they will be much more likely to be friendly and happy afterwards.'

'Very good, very good!' said the servant, laughing.

'Balambal,' said I, after the servant had gone, 'I cannot stay here.'

'What will you do? Will you leave me in your stepmother's power?'

'I don't know what to do. It was cruel in your mother not to take us with her.'

'She will soon return,' said Balambal; 'let us wait patiently till then.'

That afternoon I told my troubles to the Scripture-teacher, and asked his advice. He told me that Mr. Knox was in need of a writer, to keep the accounts of the mission. 'If you can obtain this situation, you could live at a hostel, or I could give you a room in my house. I will speak for you to the missionary.'

The teacher did not wish me to stay with my uncle, as he thought by getting me away from my friends to some place where he could meet me often, he might be able to influence me in favour of Christianity.

Except in large cities like Madras, European gentlemen never live in the midst of Hindu towns. Their bungalows are usually situated in the midst of large compounds, in a suburb by themselves. They are thus away from the dust and noise of the streets. The barking of dogs, the braying of donkeys, the beating of tomtoms, and the blowing of fifes and bagpipes, that at funerals, marriages, and religious festivals go on all

night, do not vex their ears. Their gardens are nicely kept, and the roads near where they live are always clean, and hard, and smooth. Mr. Knox's bungalow was near the town, and yet in this pleasant suburb.

The mission compound is a large piece of ground enclosed on the side next the town by a wall, and on the farther side, where few people walk, and where it is of less consequence whether snakes lodge or not, by a prickly hedge. In one corner is the church, and in another the boys' and girls' boarding-schools.

When I went to pay my respects to the missionary, and ask him for the situation that the Scripture-teacher had told me about, I slowly mounted the broad steps leading to the study door, and waited some time outside.

I did not know how to make my presence known. Looking through the venetians, I saw Mr. Knox writing at a large table. I coughed.

'Who is there?' asked the missionary. 'Come in.'

I ventured timidly to enter.

'Come in,' said the missionary. 'Oh, you are the lad that the Scripture-teacher has been speaking to me about. Your name is Coopooswamey. I should have known that from the ring in your nose. You are a second son, and your brother died before you were born.'

'Yes, sir,' I said. I was surprised that he knew so much about me. He knew it all from the little silver ring in my nose.

'Sit down.'

'I shall stand, sir.'

'Very well, if you like that better; but you need not be afraid of me. Sit down.'

I sat on the edge of the chair that he pointed to.

'I want to hear if you can read well. Very few educated Hindus can read their own language properly. I hope you are not neglecting your own language, and confining yourself entirely to English. Read a few verses of this chapter.'

'Yes, that will do,' said Mr. Knox, after I had read a short piece from the New Testament. 'You read fairly well—a little too fast, however, and you don't pronounce all the syllables distinctly. I shall require you to read to me and help me in my Tamil work, as well as keep the mission accounts.'

'I will do whatever you wish,' I said.

'I will give you six rupees a month, and if you please me you will get an increase by-and-by. Do you agree?'

This was not a large salary, but it was as much as I could expect at first, so I thanked Mr. Knox for his kind offer.

'Go and sit at that table in the corner, and I will give you some work.'

While I was copying some papers that Mr. Knox had placed before me, his servant came in and gave him a bit of paper.

'Tell him to come in,' said the missionary.

The servant went out, and ushered in the postmaster of Poothoor, who came forward in a very polite and deferential manner.

'I have come to pay my respects to you,' he

said to Mr. Knox, who motioned to him to take a chair.

A little dog that had come in with the servant ran up to the Brahmin playfully.

'Get away; don't trouble me!' said he, shrinking from the dog.

'You don't like dogs,' said Mr. Knox, tying it up.

'No, your honour, we are not accustomed to them. We don't allow them to enter our houses, or come near us, your honour.'

'When did you come to Coimbatore?'

'Yesterday, your honour.'

'Are you still in the post-office?'

'Yes, your honour; but my pay is very small, only fifteen rupees, your honour, very much beneath my merits. I have passed all the examinations for the post of Tasildar and Sheristadar; but I have hitherto been unsuccessful. What is to be done?'

'How is it that you have failed to get a good appointment?'

'I have no influence, your honour. Everything goes by favour.'

'It is a nice town.'

'Yes, your honour, excellent place; very fine climate, very healthy.'

'The Brahmins there are rather ill bred.'

'Yes, your honour. They are brutes, they are beasts. I can call them nothing but savages. What can you expect? They have no education.'

'They would hardly thank you if they knew the character you give them.'

He smiled at this, and said, 'I wish to ask you how far London is from Scotland.'

'It depends on what part of Scotland you mean,' said the missionary. 'From my native town, Glasgow, it is about as far as from here to Madras.'

'Your honour is a Scotchman?'

'Yes.'

'Ah! the Scotch are the finest people in the world! So gentle, so refined, so kind in every way.'

'The Scotch are certainly distinguished for some things,' said Mr. Knox; 'for enterprise, for example, but I don't think the character you give them exactly applies.'

'There are many Scotchmen in India, I think.'

'Yes, a good many.'

'Your predecessor, Mr. Strong, was a Scotchman?'

'Yes, he was.'

'Oh, he was a kind gentleman. He was my benefactor—my greatest friend, I can say. I studied in his school. It was he who got me my present post. I thank him in my heart every day, along with God! I have his image here' (placing his two hands on the left side of his breast). 'I think of him only in the coolest part of the day! The English are very different from the Scotch.'

'Yes, they are different in some things.'

'They are proud and haughty; they think themselves gods, I may say. They consider it beneath them to speak to a humble gentleman like me, or to acknowledge my salute.'

'Some of them may be proud, and treat you somewhat disdainfully ; but it is your own fault.'

'How, your honour?'

'You all approach them so abjectly and cringingly, as if you would consider it a favour if they would kick you. You never resent a slight or an insult. You submit meekly and patiently to all their treatment of you. As a rule, people will only exercise self-control and forbearance when they find that they have to suffer if they don't.'

'Yes, your honour, we do stand before them like that.'

'You yourselves treat one another worse than any European treats you. See a Tasildar walking down the street, among his bowing inferiors! how proudly he shoves out his toes, moves his body from side to side, and looks haughtily away.'

'Yes, your honour, they do so ; they do walk like that. The Europeans are great rajahs in this country, but I suppose that they are nothing in England. They are mostly the sons of washermen, shoemakers, potters, and people of that class.'

'Who told you so?'

'I have heard it.'

'I suppose you read it in some native newspaper?'

'Yes, your honour ; I did see it in a native paper.'

'That is the way you speak about your rulers, is it? There is not a finer body of men in the world, If these are what you think low-class Europeans, what must those left in Europe be like!'

'Yes, that is what I thought, your honour. If a man

is worth anything, and has a good position in his own country, he will not leave it.'

'Quite the reverse. It is the noble, the brave, the enterprising that come abroad. The low caste have not sufficient courage to do so.'

'If they could get a proper position and living in their own country, why did they leave it?'

'Their position,' replied the missionary, 'might be good, and yet not so good as that which they enjoy here, with abundant wealth, two or three carriages, four or five horses, a retinue of servants, and the power and dignity of rajahs.'

At this point, one of the teachers of the Coimbatore College came in, and the postmaster took leave and went away.

'You are looking remarkably well,' said Mr. Knox to the schoolmaster, 'are you better now?'

He was a tall, well-made, but flabby-looking man, with a nervous, anxious manner. He had been ill for nearly a year with chronic dysentery.

'Yes,' replied the teacher, 'I have been well for some time, but I am not strong yet. I have come to pay my respects to you.'

'What is the medicine that cured you? You tried every medicine and every method of cure, I think.'

'A native man—a goldsmith cured me.'

'What medicine did he give you?'

'He gave me no medicine at all.'

'How did he cure you then?'

'He made worship to his god. I heard about him

and called him. He came, and asked me to give him six annas, which I did. He said he must consult his god whether he could cure me. On the third day he came again and told me he could cure me.'

'Did he not give you any medicine?'

'No; he gave me a few ashes to smear on my forehead.'

'What more did he do?'

'He came every second day to see me.'

'What did he say?'

'Nothing at all.'

'He simply looked at you, and went away?'

'Yes, that was all he did.'

'When did you begin to get better?'

'From the time that he came. At first, I felt a kind of burning in my stomach. By-and-by that went away.'

'What god did he worship?'

'Subramamen.'

'That is not your god?'

'No; I worship Vishnu.'

'Do you worship Subramamen now?'

'I worship Vishnu in him. I consider Vishnu in everything.'

'What did you give the man?'

'I gave him five rupees for the worship and fifteen rupees as a present.'

'When did you give it?'

'About a month ago.'

'And you have been well since then?'

'Yes, but I am not quite strong yet.'

'Are you going to return to the college now?'

'No, sir, I wish to go somewhere for a change first. After my leave expires I will go back to the college.'

After some further conversation he asked permission to go, and, making salaam, he went away.

CHAPTER XIV.

MISSION LIFE—ARRIVAL OF A YOUNG MISSIONARY—HINDU CONVERSION.

THE life of a missionary is not an unpleasant one. He shares the importance and dignity of the British; his power and influence among the native Christians are very great, and he is regarded by the Hindus as a man of light and leading. He mixes more freely among the people, is more approachable by them than any other European. They soon learn that he is an upright, trustworthy man, who earnestly desires to do them good, and promote their interests in every way; and they therefore, in his private capacity, regard him with confidence and favour.

Mr. Knox was not tied to any special kind of mission work. He had been frequently requested to teach English and science in the high school, but he steadfastly refused. He held that the Hindu masters could teach all secular subjects, if not as well as a European, yet sufficiently well for practical purposes, and that his duty was to devote himself entirely to direct Christian work and to the general interests of the mission.

His mornings were occupied in preaching to the

heathen and teaching Scripture in his schools, and the midday was spent in writing and study. He went frequently from home for three weeks at a time, visiting out-stations and preaching in remote villages.

Although he knew Tamil fairly well, and could speak fluently, he yet had such a sense of the difficulty of the language and the importance of correct pronunciation that he used daily to practise reading along with me. I would read first, and he after me ; so that he might imitate not merely the pronunciation, but the exact Hindu tone and accent. He became so correct and beautiful a speaker that any one who did not know his voice, hearing him in another room, would not know that it was a European who was speaking.

In making a sermon he used to dictate to me, and I wrote. When a word or phrase puzzled him, we both assisted in finding the right expression. When the sermon was finished, he would lie on a sofa while I read it to him three or four times. He thus committed to memory, not merely the sentences, but the proper emphasis and intonation.

Although I could not enter fully into the meaning and spirit of many of his sermons, especially those that were intended for the Christian congregation, yet I could not but admire their pure and elevated character, and I was insensibly yet deeply influenced by them.

Mr. Smith, a young missionary from England, arrived at this time, and we went to the railway station to meet and welcome him. The station is a substantially built stone platform and row of offices, with a sloping shed for protection from the scorching

sun. In a roofed enclosure, like a cattle pen, the native passengers were sitting among some bread and sweet-meat sellers, waiting for the train—only gentlemen and their servants, and important people, such as Government clerks, policemen, and Brahmins, being allowed on the platform before the train's arrival. There were greater hubbub and excitement than usual. A row of policemen, with their white tunics and trousers, their small red turbans, and old muskets, were drawn up in military order. A group of European gentlemen, some in uniform and others in morning dress, were standing by themselves chatting cheerfully, and laughing at each other's jokes. The chaplain, in a straight black coat and a white tope, came forward, and shook hands with Mr. Knox.

'Have you come to meet the Governor?'

No, I did not know that he was to pass Coimbatore to-day. I have come to meet Mr. Smith.'

'Ah, he is to be your colleague, I hear.'

'Will the Governor stay in Coimbatore?'

'No, he will merely spend a few minutes, and then go on.'

Mr. Knox went towards the group of Brahmins and the native Government officials, who, in all the grandeur of gold-embroidered turbans and white flowing garments, were standing and moving about in a dignified way by themselves.

'How do you do, Junga Rao?' said Mr. Knox, salaaming, and shaking hands with a stout, handsome, smiling native gentleman, with a broad, intelligent, happy face. 'Are you staying in Coimbatore?'

'I have a case in the District Court here, which will ocupy me for a fortnight,' replied the pleader. 'Are you going anywhere?'

'No,' said Mr. Knox, 'I have come to receive a young missionary, who has newly arrived from England. Come and see me, and I will introduce you to him.'

'I shall be most happy,' replied the polite Brahmin.

The bell now rang, and we saw the train coming round the curve over the tank embankment. As it steamed into the station the policemen and the gentlemen, both European and native, straightened themselves up a little. The Governor's aide-de-camp and private secretary stepped down from the brass railed-in platform of the gorgeous imperial saloon, which was decked out with crimson and gold, and furnished like a drawing-room. The Governor, a pleasant, stout, white-whiskered gentleman, came out and shook hands with the European gentlemen, as they were one by one introduced to him, and then made salaams to each of the native gentlemen who pressed forward to be presented.

After seeing the Governor I ran to the fore part of the train where Mr. Knox was talking to the young missionary.

'Have you a servant?' asked Mr. Knox.

'No,' said Mr. Smith. 'I was told in Madras that it would be better to get one in Coimbatore.'

'Then show Coopooswamey here all the luggage that belongs to you, and he will select a boy and have the things brought to the bungalow. We need not wait.'

Leaving a portmanteau and a box, and several small

packages in my charge, Mr. Knox and Mr. Smith went outside to Mr. Knox's carriage and drove away.

The luggage was placed in a little bullock cart under the bamboo cover, and we trotted along briskly till we came to the bungalow, and I went to the dining-room to tell Mr. Smith that his luggage had come.

The missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Knox, Miss Philp, and Mr. Smith, were seated at breakfast, and seemed very happy. They were evidently enjoying their meal, and were talking and laughing merrily. A large punkah was swinging over their heads, pulled by the horsekeeper, who was sitting outside on the verandah. The ayah and one of the male servants were waiting at table.

Although the English in India get out of bed and commence their work, especially all work that has to be done in the open air, at daybreak, they do not take breakfast till about noon, and then their meal is very substantial.

'Boy,' I heard Mr. Knox say to his servant, 'help Mr. Smith to another chop. You won't have any more? Well, boy, bring the curry and rice, and get the eggs boiled, and put the jam and fruit on the table.'

'Yes, sir,' shouted the boy, and hurried outside to the cook room for the curry and rice.

'Have you tasted curry and rice yet?' Mr. Knox asked.

'Yes, I had some in Madras.'

'Did you like it?'

'Fairly well; but I hope to take to it better by-and-by.'

'They told me,' said Miss Philp, 'that I was sure to learn the language if I took to curry and rice.'

'Then I must try to like it,' said Mr. Smith.

'How did you like Madras?' asked Mr. Knox.

'Very much,' replied Mr. Smith.

'Did you see anything of native life there?'

'Only the servants, and I do not think it is right to treat them as the Europeans do,' said Mr. Smith. 'We should try to win them by love and kindness.'

'Love and kindness are all very well,' said Mr. Knox; 'but undiluted love and kindness do not suit the Hindus. What they need is fairness and firmness. We have found that no servants can stand praise. If the dinner is particularly well cooked, the curry flavoured specially to our liking, and I say to the boy, "Boy, this is how I like the curry," it will never be like that again. Praise your servant, and he will think that he has your favour, and may do as he likes.'

'I don't like to hear that,' said Mr. Smith, 'and I hope that I shall never have these opinions.'

As the breakfast seemed nearly over, and the bullock driver was getting impatient to be paid, I stepped forward into the entrance to the room.

'Has Mr. Smith's luggage come?' asked Mr. Knox.

'Yes, sir,' said I.

'I will go and see it,' said Mr. Smith, rising.

'How much is it?' he asked me when we were by ourselves.

'Four annas,' said the bullock boy.

'He never gets more than three annas, sir,' I said. 'It used to be two annas, but Mr. Knox gives three.'

'I will give four annas this time,' said Mr. Smith; 'but I don't promise to do so always.'

'What a kind gentleman!' I thought.

The conversion of a Hindu is usually a slow and gradual process. The truth and saving efficacy of Christianity are not revealed to him as by a flash of lightning piercing the darkness of midnight, or with the suddenness of a tropical dawn; his spiritual illumination resembles rather what Mr. Knox has told me of the slow approach of day in Northern countries; first, the thin streaks of light seem to make darkness visible, then the night vanishes, and finally a long twilight is succeeded by clear daylight and the full blaze of the sun.

Generally, the first effect of Christian truth is to open one's eyes to the folly, absurdity, and vileness of Hinduism.

It does not need a prophet to reveal the falseness of the gods, the licentiousness and trickery of the priests, and the immoral and debasing character of many of the so-called sacred rites; one's conscience and natural reason are sufficient to show us all that; but it needs Christianity, by the contrast of its reasonableness and moral excellence, to throw the deformity of Hinduism into bold relief, and make one disgusted and ashamed on account of it.

The Christian view of God—His unity, holiness, and love; the moral law, the Sermon on the Mount, the loveliness of Christ's character and life, fill a Hindu with profound admiration. He is probably not yet, however, convinced of the Divinity of Christ, or of the efficacy of His sacrifice. Although persuaded that Hinduism is false and Christianity true; or, as he would express it, that Christianity is a good religion, he does not feel

bound to forsake the one and embrace the other. 'Will it not be enough if I worship God in spirit? When bowing before the idol, I will think only of the true God, and He who can read my heart will accept my worship as offered to Him.'

There are many educated, cultured Hindus—how many it is impossible to tell—who are in this position. They try to make a compromise with conscience. They read the Bible and pray to the true God; they believe in Christianity and practise Hinduism. They are the more tempted to do this, as Hindu sentiment is vastly tolerant of speculation, and entirely intolerant of practice. Hinduism has been able to exist so long, because it does not seek directly to fetter thought. It practically says, 'Believe what you please, but follow the customs, perform the rites.' In the bosom of Hinduism, heretical sects flourish luxuriously; indeed, almost every educated man is in heart an infidel to his own religion. The only thing that Hinduism refuses to tolerate is nonconformity.

In most cases it requires something more than mere intellectual conviction to make a Hindu abandon what his forefathers have practised for thousands of years, and what, not merely all the power of the priesthood, but all the influences of friendship, of a patriarchal family life, of early training, of social sentiment and respectability, unite to maintain. It is probably affliction and suffering of some kind that at length startles him out of his cowardly and hypocritical compromise: his business is unprosperous, his health fails, his children die; conscience awakes, and he imagines that his troubles

are the result of God's anger. His sins rise up before him. He examines the Christian faith more carefully and anxiously, becomes convinced of the Divinity and authority of Christ, and resolves formally to renounce Hinduism and embrace Christianity by a public baptism.

He becomes openly a Christian: his heathen practices are abandoned. He is cast off as completely by Hinduism as it has been cast off by him. The doors of the Hindu temple and of Hindu society are shut against him. He has crossed the Rubicon, he has burnt his bridges, and never again can he be a Hindu.

His knowledge of Christianity, however, may yet be but elementary. He has not yet experienced a spiritual change of heart, and is not even aware that any such change is needed. He has forsaken the worship of false gods, and now worships the true; he has embraced a new religion—but not yet become a new creature in Christ Jesus.

I was gradually and irresistibly brought to this position. At first I had strenuously resisted the influence of the religious instruction in school, and of the conversations that I had with the Scripture-teacher and Mr. Knox. I tried to believe that there must be a great deal more evil in Christianity and a great deal more good in Hinduism than I could discover. In spite of all my efforts, however, my ancestral faith gradually dissipated like mist.

I did not, however, like so many, subside into indifference or scepticism. Never did I doubt the existence

of God. I yearned to know Him, and to win His favour.

I did not conceal from Mr. Knox the state of my mind.

'I can see,' said I to him, one day, in the course of conversation, 'that the rites that Hinduism prescribes—pilgrimages, bathing in rivers, rolling on the ground, putting ashes on the body, cannot please God; but there must be some way of pleasing Him.'

'There is a way,' replied Mr. Knox; 'but nothing that we can do can gain for us the favour of God and reconciliation with Him.'

'How is that?' I asked. 'What, then, is to be done?'

'Nothing that man can do can fully satisfy his own conscience; how, then, can it satisfy God?'

'But is not God merciful?'

'Yes, God is merciful; but just now it is not a question of mercy at all that we are considering. It is how to satisfy His justice and gain His righteous favour; and nothing that we can do is sufficient for that. No religion since the world began has been able to solve the difficulty and show how man can be just with God, except Christianity.'

'You mean the death of Christ?'

'Yes; Christ's life and Christ's death are a sacrifice that are quite sufficient to atone for our guilt. One proof that the death of Christ is a sufficient satisfaction for sin is, that it satisfies the conscience. Those who trust in Christ have perfect peace.'

'Is there nothing at all, then, that we must do?' I asked.

'There is much that we must do, but nothing to give us a claim on God. You have heard, perhaps, of perpetual pensions?'

'No, I don't remember.'

'A perpetual pension is an income which a man receives from the state, not for any merit or worth in him, or for anything that he has done. His great-grandfather or his great-great-grandfather performed some distinguished service for his country, won a great battle, perhaps, and as a reward a pension was granted, not only to him, but to his heirs, also, for all time to come. These heirs could do nothing to merit the pension—it had been gained for them by the merit of their heroic ancestor, and yet they had to do something. They would require to prove their heirship and claim the pension, and probably they would be expected in some way to live worthy of the dignity that they had inherited. So with us. Pardon and the favour of God are an inheritance that is ours through the death of Christ. What we have to do is by faith to claim the inheritance. We must believe ourselves to be Christ's heirs, and we must believe that God for His sake pardons our sins, that He receives us graciously, and loves us freely.'

'Is that all that we must do? Is nothing necessary except faith?'

'You must give yourself to God, and faithfully and sincerely endeavour to do His will; but that only because it is your duty, not to merit or win pardon: that is yours by free gift, and cannot be merited. A loving, obedient child does not fulfil his father's wishes in order to obtain

payment: he obeys him because he loves him. The father will reward him, no doubt; but it will be from love and kindness. In the same spirit of love we must serve God, and in the same spirit of love He will not fail to reward us.'

Although Mr. Knox spoke with great plainness and with abundant wealth of illustration, I did not at that time clearly understand all that he said. In listening to a teacher, we usually appropriate only what our mind is craving at the time. A geologist does not gather plants, nor a botanist stones. I was becoming more and more convinced that it was my duty to embrace Christianity, and the terribleness of that step appeared to me so great that I could not think that there would be no merit in it, and that God would not be pleased with me for taking it. I did not at that time, however, analyse my feelings so exactly as this. I saw simply that it was my duty to become a Christian, and my decision was hastened by events that occurred soon after.

CHAPTER XV.

FAMINE.

IT was while I held my post under Mr. Knox at Coimbatore that the terrible famine of 1877-78 began. It was an awful time, which no one, I imagine, who lived through it, will ever forget. Notwithstanding the heroic efforts of the Government and others, a million and a half of lives were lost by actual starvation.

At first Coimbatore suffered little, and for a while we were able to send supplies to other districts. Although by this constant drain food became scarce and dear, work in the fields was still available, and labourers could earn their usual wages.

At length, however, the customary rains failed ; the tanks, when they should have been full of water, were dry, and many of the wells became useless.

It was a famine not so much of food as of work. There was food for those who had money to buy it. Rice was brought in large quantities from Bengal and Burmah, but the heavens being as brass, and the earth as iron, the chief industry of the country was stopped ; labourers could obtain no work, and were quickly

brought to the brink of starvation. The small shop-keepers lost their trade, and the weavers found their cloth increasing on their hands. The people who had no money to buy food had none for clothing either.

Those who had property sold their jewels, their cattle, their brass idols, the very doors and windows of their houses. Farmers lived for awhile on their seed grain, and then, with the weavers, whose looms were silent because they had no money to buy thread, joined the ranks of the starving labourers, and sought to earn enough to keep life in by working on the roads and on other relief works started by Government.

Thousands were too weak to work, and for them camps were provided, where, like ravenous beasts, they fed on the lump of doughy rice that was daily thrown down to them.

Many, rather than violate their caste by eating in this promiscuous fashion, food cooked by they knew not whom, preferred to remain in their village and die; or at length goaded by despair, would, when just ready to die, set out for the nearest relief camp, and before they could reach it lie down by the wayside and perish.

Husbands forsook their wives, fathers their children. Mothers clung to their offspring for a while, and then the instinct of self-preservation proving stronger than maternal love, forsook them also. The poor little fatherless, motherless wretches wandered about in dirt, starvation, and rags, and subsisted on the unwholesome fruit of the prickly pear, and on what they could obtain by begging, and at length found refuge in relief camps and in orphanages provided for them by missionaries.

How pitiful! how sadly, touchingly interesting to see a group of famine-stricken children coming in to join the orphanage. Squalid and dirty, with a rag tied round their loins, a black earthen pot in their hand, and a look of hunger and savage distrust on their face, they stand before us.

'It was this boy,' said the native evangelist Paul—pointing to a lad who stood a little in front of the others, and who had a bolder and more self-reliant look than the rest—'it was this boy who brought the others, and told me they wished to be taken into the orphanage.'

We looked at the boy thus distinguished. He had large eyes, a large mouth, and full lips. As we looked at him he hung his head in a bashful manner.

Looking at the poor boys, Mr. Knox said, in a kindly tone, 'Would you like to stay with us? We will give you good food and clothes, and make you as happy as we can.'

'Yes,' said the tall boy, whom we afterwards found to be a Roman Catholic called Lazerus. 'Yes, we will stay.'

'You won't run away?'

'No, we won't run away.'

'Take them,' said Mr. Knox to me. 'Give them a comfortable wash, and clean clothes. Better burn their rags. Bathe their heads with carbolic lotion, and don't let them eat too much at first.'

I led away the miserable urchins, each one clinging to his rags, and grasping his earthen pot, as if he would still have to collect his food and eat out of it as before.

ORPHANS SAVED FROM THE FAMINE.

To discipline and train these juvenile savages, for such they had really become, through the demoralising influence of their famine life, was no easy matter.

Mr. Knox's first and persistent endeavour was to secure implicit obedience, and destroy the inveterate tendency to lying.

Lying is so common among Hindus that it is hardly considered a fault.

'There is nothing that so fosters the habit of lying,' said Mr. Knox to me, 'as on every slight suspicion to ask a number of questions. The person questioned, seeing that you have no proof, and anxious to hide his fault, tells lies; and tells lie upon lie. If you suspect a boy of doing something wrong, say nothing, but keep your eyes open. When you have satisfactorily discovered the offence, don't ask any questions, but go to the boy, or call him to you, and say, "On such and such an occasion you did so and so." The culprit, perceiving that he is found out, will not think of telling a lie. If he does, you can say, "Now you are guilty of two faults, first, the crime, and second, a lie to conceal it. If you had acknowledged your fault, I should have pardoned you, but now you must be punished for both offences." Few will continue to tell lies if they are treated always in this way.'

The building in which the boys lived was at the east end of the mission grounds, and in front of it was a pleasant garden, watered by a well.

Mr. Knox used, the first thing in the morning, to visit the orphanage, and see that all was going on right; and frequently in the evening he would stroll among

the boys, watch them at their play, and listen to their talk.

To cheer and brighten their life, he put four violins in the school, and paid a Christian lad to come every night for an hour to teach all who cared to learn. He also built a rabbit and pigeon house, and made the boys feed and attend to the rabbits and the pigeons. Various industries, such as carpentering, weaving, mat and basket making were started, and the boys were made to work at these trades during half of the day. All were taught reading; but only the youngest and the cleverest were allowed to spend their whole time at school. The little ones, because they were too young to work; and the bright ones because they, it was hoped, would be able to gain a position among the educated Hindus, which it would be vain to expect that all the orphans would reach.

One morning, at half-past six, Mr. Knox came among us while a serious investigation was going on.

'What is it?' said he to me.

'I did not wish to tell you, sir,' I replied. 'Some of the boys every morning break one of the rules in a way that is very offensive. I have spoken to them many times, and tried to find out who are guilty, but no one will confess, and no one will tell on the others.'

'This is a serious matter,' said Mr. Knox. 'The fault itself might be excused, but to tell a lie to hide it is very bad.'

He went into the orphanage, and made all the sixty boys stand in a row.

'Some of you have been breaking the rules, and you

all say you do not know who it is. If the guilty will confess I will pardon them, but if they persist in denying I must punish you all.'

The boys looked very grave.

'I did not do it, sir.'

'I did not do it, sir,' said one and another.

'I don't wish any one to say that he did not do it,' said Mr. Knox. 'Let the guilty boys speak, or let some one tell who they are.'

No one spoke.

'Hold out your hands.'

The first boy to receive a stroke of the cane was a little comical fellow called Amos Ours (they had all been baptised after being about a year or eighteen months in the school). He looked up in Mr. Knox's face with such a grave, innocent expression, that that gentleman had not the heart to hurt him.

After each of the sixty had received one stroke of the cane, the missionary said, 'Will no one confess? If you do not, I must give you six cuts. If you acknowledge your fault, you will be pardoned.'

The boys here began to cry, and turned to each other, saying, 'Was it you? Was it you? If you did it, tell.'

'Each of you is responsible for the good behaviour of all the rest. If you don't try to make each other keep the rules, you must all suffer together.'

After giving each boy two more strokes on the hand with the cane, Mr. Knox's heart began to relent. He was almost sorry that he had said he would give each boy six strokes.

'I won't punish you any more now,' he said; 'but if you don't acknowledge your fault, I must give you the rest another time. To-morrow is Christmas Day; if you don't make up your mind before that to tell the truth, you can have no Christmas dinner.'

At noon all the children assembled on the verandah to receive a Scripture and a singing lesson.

'They have resolved to acknowledge their fault,' said I.

'Let those who have been guilty stand up,' said Mr. Knox.

Five boys rose, and among them little Amos Ours, who had looked so innocent.

'Sit down,' said the missionary; 'you have been punished sufficiently; don't do it again.' This was a lesson that they never forgot. Never again had such painful measures to be taken.

When a girl had to be punished she was made to wear, for a day or two, a cloth of a coarse texture and different colour from those of the others.

The sense of shame which this caused usually made the wildest and most intractable girls gentle and obedient. One of the girls, called Krubay, was taken into the bungalow to help with the baby, and learn ayah work.

Besides her there were five other servants—the ayah, the cook, the tunecutch (a female servant who assists the cook), the maty (a man who does the household work, waits table, etc.), and a sweeper woman.

This is the smallest number of servants to be found in almost any European bungalow.

It was discovered that a loaf of bread and some other things were being stolen every day. The place where the bread was kept was locked; yet every day a loaf disappeared. Of course no one knew who took it.

'I will try to set a trap that will discover the thief,' said the missionary. He buttered a slice of bread, spread over this a layer of ipecacuanha, and on the top of that a layer of jam. Next day the bait was gone.

ORPHAN GIRLS.

The ayah said that she was not very well. Suspicion naturally fell on her; but this was allayed when it was known that she was suffering from a slight attack of fever, and not from nausea.

At last Krubay was discovered to be the culprit.

Mr. Knox made her stand in the presence of all the other children, and, after a grieved and intensely solemn

manner, telling her the enormity of her fault, he said, 'I am going to give you a very severe punishment. It would not be kindness to you to do otherwise. I wish this to be the last punishment that you will ever receive.'

The change in Krubay's character was most thorough. She became honest and truthful. There was no one that Mr. and Mrs. Knox afterwards more trusted and esteemed than Krubay. Mr. Knox relied more on the good influence of rewards than of punishments.

Every Saturday one pie (half a farthing) was given to each of the little children against whose name there was no bad mark in the record of the week. The larger children got three pies.

The boys at school who were at the top of their class obtained a reward of six pies; if lower, three pies; and if below the middle of the class, nothing at all. The eagerness to obtain these rewards, the bitter grief and tears when they failed, and the happy smiles when they were successful, showed how useful and effectual this mode of discipline was.

CHAPTER XVI.

I MAKE UP MY MIND AND RECEIVE BAPTISM—METHODS OF WORK IN INDIA.

ABOUT this time my father-in-law died, and my wife and mother-in-law went to live with relatives in Tanjore. It seemed as if the obstacles to my baptism were being providentially one by one removed. My stepmother, aided by her brother, a rascally lawyer, had defrauded me of my share of my father's property, so that I was quite cut off from all intercourse with her, and I never went to see her.

When I told Mr. Knox that I had decided to be baptised, he congratulated me very heartily.

'It is a step,' he said, 'that you will never regret. I thought that you were a Christian in heart; and there is nothing more miserable than to be inwardly a Christian and outwardly a Hindu.'

The sacred rite was performed before any one in the town knew, so that no talk or commotion was excited.

I entered the church—it was the first time that I had ever been present at a Christian service—and sat on the front cane bench. The congregation had assembled, and the bell had stopped ringing. The men were

sitting on the one side of the church and the women on the other. All were bare-footed—the men having left their shoes outside, and, what seemed to me strange, their turbans were off, and placed on the ground under the seats. A European, when he wishes to show respect to any one, takes off his hat ; a Hindu does exactly the opposite, he puts his turban on. The native Christians, however, have been taught in their worship to follow the European custom. Almost all, even the little boys as well, had their heads half shaved, and wore, Hindu fashion, the tuft of hair at the back of their head. The dress of the women was bright and cheerful. How much cleaner and neater they were than women of the same class among the heathen ! and how wonderfully thoughtful and intelligent they seemed ! The matrons were distinguished from the maidens by having their heads covered by the border of their cloth.

The missionary and his wife, Mr. Smith, and Miss Philp, sat on the front seat ; and the boarding-school girls, who formed the church choir, were immediately behind them and on the mat in front.

The pastor, clad in a white gown, entered from a door at the side, and stepping to the pulpit, stood for a few moments in silent prayer, with the sleeve of his gown covering his face. He was dressed in European fashion, with trousers and boots, and wore his hair and whiskers in the same foreign mode.

Before the sermon, which was a very eloquent one, a chapter was read, a prayer delivered, and two hymns were sung to English tunes, and a native lyric to the accompaniment of a violin.

Then Mr. Knox stepped on to the platform, and motioned to me to stand in front of him.

He put a few questions to me, made me promise to abandon all idolatrous practices, and live in a manner becoming a Christian; and then, while I knelt down, he dipped his hand into a brass bowl of water, and baptised me in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The ceremony did not make so much impression on my mind as I thought it would. It had appeared to me, in anticipation, such a terribly momentous act; and now, when it was done, my heart was calm. I was stirred by no deep emotion. I felt, indeed, that I had taken a step that could not be retraced, and I was profoundly thankful that I had done so. My conscience told me that I had done right, and I enjoyed more peace and satisfaction than I had experienced for a long time.

One of the wildest boys in the school was Lazerus. He had one of his front teeth broken in a fight with some heathen boys who came into the mission compound, and whom Lazerus and the other orphan boys, with stones and sticks, drove out. His broken tooth gave a comical look to his otherwise striking features.

Mr. Knox put him to learn carpentry, but he would not set his mind to this trade, and there was constant jarring between him and the foreman, and constant complaints carried to Mr. Knox against him.

At length the missionary said to him, 'Do you wish to be a carpenter, or not? If you do, you must give your mind to the work.'

'I don't want to be a carpenter.'

'What then do you want to be?'

'A servant to master.'

'Very good. Go to the bungalow, and I will tell Mrs. Knox to give you something to do.'

Lazerus was thus installed as a sort of 'boots.' He cleaned the knives, washed the plates, brushed the boots, and occasionally carried out the baby, which last service he was always delighted to perform, his large eyes sparkling and his big mouth spreading into a smile. After a time Mr. Knox thought that Lazerus should be earning a wage, and as he did not really need his services, he hesitated to include him among the regular household staff, and therefore recommended him to Mr. Smith.

'I have found him honest, intelligent, and possessed of more character and energy than most Hindus. I don't think you will find a better boy.'

'Since you recommend him I have no hesitation in taking him,' said Mr. Smith. 'What salary must I give him?'

'If you hire a stranger you will need to give eight or nine rupees, but as it will be Lazerus's first situation, I think six rupees will be enough. I have no doubt he will be pleased with that. He can give two rupees to the orphanage for his food, keep one rupee, and give the other three rupees to me to put in the mission bank for him. I compel all my servants, Christian teachers, and preachers to put some of their pay every month in the bank. This has proved a very wholesome way of keeping them out of debt, and making them independent.

They have always something at Christmas to buy new clothes for the year with.'

'Very well, I will take Lazerus,' said Mr. Smith, who was sitting along with Mrs. Knox and her husband in the drawing-room.

'I will go out to the verandah and tell him,' said Mr. Knox.

Lazerus was sitting in a small room a little distance from the bungalow, next to the kitchen, surrounded by plates and knives, lamps and boots.

When Mr. Knox called him he rose, wiped his hands on a towel, pressed his turban down on his head, loosed his cloth, which was tucked up above his knees, and came to the verandah.

'Mr. Smith wishes you to be his servant, he will give you good wages, and be very kind to you.'

Lazerus hung down his head, and said nothing.

'What is wrong?' said Mr. Knox. 'Don't you want to go?'

'I don't want to leave master.'

'But I am giving you no wages, and Mr. Smith will pay you a salary.'

'I don't want to leave master,' said Lazerus.

Mr. Knox returned smiling to the drawing-room, and described the interview.

'I did not know that a Hindu was capable of so much fidelity and attachment. Of course I don't like to drive such a boy away from me.'

'He is quite flattered at Lazerus's preference,' said Mrs. Knox.

After that Lazerus became Mr. Knox's personal atten-

dant. He went with him on all his journeys, packed his clothes, his camp furniture and utensils, and cooked his food when away on preaching tours. Of course he obtained from Mr. Knox the salary that Mr. Smith would have given him. He occasionally gave trouble, so much so that the rod had to be administered. Mr. Knox would tell him to hold out his hand, and would then administer the chastisement that seemed necessary. Lazerus would take neither rebuke nor punishment from any one but his master, and even Mrs. Knox had to confess that he was quite beyond her control, yet a beating from 'master' always did him good. His face, however gloomy and sulky before, would brighten, and he would do his work with a cheerful, happy alacrity, as if a burden had been lifted from his mind.

Once Lazerus ran away, but when Mr. Knox returned from his next journey he found him on the front steps, waiting with a smile to welcome him.

Mr. Smith was very earnest and zealous. Having come to India with his soul on fire to convert the Hindus, it was a great trial to him to be required to wait for a year, and quietly to study the language, and not be allowed to conduct any department of the mission.

But an apprentice does not usually begin to learn his trade by setting up his notions of how things should be done. A missionary has at first a hard task. He has to learn the use of his tools, and the nature of the material he is to work on. He knows neither the language nor the habits and dispositions of the people whom he has come to teach and convert. His knowledge and ideas are not the knowledge and ideas that

they can understand. He is at first in many respects unfitted to understand them and be their teacher, and yet not unfrequently the first thing he does is to criticise the senior missionaries who are associated with him.

It is well if the young missionary keeps these opinions to himself, and lets them lie in his head for a time unexpressed and unpractised, till he is able to judge what fate they deserve. Probably he will be too earnest and zealous to do this; he will be prone to quarrel with the older missionaries, and pass through a period of painful jangling before his relation to them is properly adjusted, and he settles down as a wise, sensible, useful missionary.

'If you wish to make a man your enemy, show him a kindness,' said Mr. Knox once to me. 'It may seem a strange thing to say, but it is true. The greatest and perhaps the only persistent enemy that I ever made was a man to whom I lent three hundred rupees for his marriage expenses.

'At first, when I came to India, I thought that I ought to treat every native as a friend. I soon found that their ideas of the claims of friendship and mine were very different, and that instead of inspiring gratitude and goodwill by my kindness, I only caused disappointment, vexation, and a feeling of injustice. Naturally, I soon learned to exercise reserve and self-restraint, and to show goodwill and warm friendship only to those whom I had proved, and who would not presume on my goodness, and look upon it as a blank cheque for them to fill up for any amount.

'Those whom I now receive into favour value my regard as a reward of trustworthiness, and as a special

mark of confidence, while they have learned that, as it has been gained by merit, it can only be retained on the same terms. Others, who wish my favour, and who yet do not enjoy much of its sunshine, have nothing to complain of, because they know that any real or solid benefit I can do them I will not withhold, but that the show of favour, the display of confidence and esteem which constitutes the communion of friendship, are only for those who can win them.'

CHAPTER XVII.

LAZERUS'S COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE.

ALTHOUGH among native Christians marriage does not take place so early as among the Hindus, still, those most interested are not allowed to arrange the matter for themselves. It would not only conflict with native feeling, but would lead to abuse. A young man may make up his mind as to the girl he would like to marry, and girls may have their preferences, but all negotiations must be conducted through parents and guardians; and as missionaries are in the position of parents to the orphan children under their care, they have to perform the parental duty of providing wives for the young men, and husbands for the girls.

A dusky down had appeared on Lazerus's chin, and there was suspicion that he sometimes patronised the barber to shave more than the front of his head. He was forming questionable companionships, and giving his friends anxiety.

Mr. Knox consulted the pastor, the Scripture-teacher, and myself, and we were all of opinion that Lazerus should marry.

'You are going to the hills for change in a few weeks,'

said I to Mr. Knox. 'While you are away none of us will be able to control Lazerus, and he is sure to get into mischief. He will perhaps go away and join the Roman Catholics. If he has a wife he will be all right.'

Mr. Knox called Lazerus to his study, and said to him,

'I think it is time that you should marry.'

Lazerus held down his head and blushed.

'Have you any objections?'

'No,' said Lazerus.

'Is there any girl that you have been thinking of?'

'No.'

'There are three girls in the orphanage any one of whom will suit you. There is Martha and Jessie and Aubay.'

'May I have two or three days to think about it?'

'Certainly; it is an important matter. When you have made up your mind, come and tell me.'

Three days after, Lazerus came again to the study.

'Have you made up your mind? Who have you chosen?' asked Mr. Knox.

'Martha.'

'I will tell Mrs. Knox to speak to her,' said the missionary.

When Martha was told of Lazerus' proposal, she at once said—

'I sha'n't have him; and if I am obliged to take him, I will run away.'

'There is no necessity for that,' said Mrs. Knox. 'You will not be compelled to marry any one you do not wish.'

Mr. Knox told me that he was very sorry to tell Lazerus his misfortune, it was so evidently his first love.

'Would you like to have either of the other two?' asked the missionary, after he had informed the young man of Martha's refusal.

Lazerus looked vexed, but he knew the chances of courtship, and his disappointment could not be so great as it would have been if he had courted her in the European way, and made his proposal to her in person.

In reply to Mr. Knox's question, he said at once, 'Jessie.'

Jessie was spoken to, and when she was asked if she would have Lazerus for her husband, she hung her head for a minute, and then lifting it, said, 'Yes.'

Jessie was a dark, bright-eyed, merry girl. She had always a smile or a laugh on her face, and was one of the best singers in the school. It was she who was usually made to start the tune at the singing lesson.

Preparations were immediately made for the marriage. Cloths for the bride and bridegroom, various simple articles of furniture, such as a grass mat, a broom, a mortar and pestle, a brass drinking vessel, and some earthen pots for cooking with, were bought.

Lazerus had selected the cloth for his bride, and the marriage was to take place within a week, when he came to the study and said to Mr. Knox,

'I don't want Jessie.'

'Why? what is this?' asked the missionary, looking up in a serious manner. 'Why don't you want Jessie?'

'She can't sew,' said Lazerus.

'This will never do,' said the missionary; 'you can't draw back now. You have proposed to Jessie, and she has accepted you. If you reject her now, she will be ruined; no one will marry her. If you don't marry Jessie, I must dismiss you from my service. I cannot recognise wickedness like this.'

Lazerus went away, and we talked to him, and gradually persuaded him to let the marriage go on. Jessie could sew, but she was not so skilful as some of the other girls. The marriage took place in the mission church. Jessie was decked with flowers, a small blue silk jacket, a white cloth, and borrowed jewels. Lazerus was resplendent in a grand turban, a long white coat, and yellow pointed slippers.

Jessie pretended to be very unwilling to be married, and kept her face in the opposite direction from her lover, and got as far away from him as possible.

Instead of putting a ring on his bride's finger, Lazerus took a small gold locket, attached to a yellow cotton string, out of his pocket, and, with bashful looks, tying it round Jessie's neck, said, after the minister, 'With this tali I thee wed.'

As soon as the wedding ceremony was over, and while the missionaries and the native pastor and the young couple were in the vestry, signing the register, the pastor's son played some lively music on a violin, and a band of young men around him sang with great vigour and cheerfulness.

All the congregation then formed a procession, and the bride and bridegroom, with the violinist and the

singers leading, went round the mission compound to the mission house, to present themselves to the missionaries and receive their congratulations.

Mr. Knox, Mrs. Knox, Miss Philp, and Mr. Smith stood waiting to receive the procession, and when they came, and the young bride and bridegroom stood before them, and the crowd of smiling, sympathetic faces gathered round, Martha perhaps half regretting her refusal, and the orphan lads and girls anticipating the time when they would be in the same position, Mr. Knox made a few simple kindly remarks, which were received with much laughter and satisfaction.

Mr. Smith, too, tried to say something witty and humorous, but, whatever was the reason, his jokes, to his evident disappointment, missed fire.

'I don't know how it is,' I heard him say afterwards to Mr. Knox, 'that, however much I try, I cannot make the people laugh.'

'Perhaps,' replied Mr. Knox, 'if you did not try so hard, you would succeed better. I don't try. I simply say something kindly, and, somehow or other, and often to my astonishment, they usually, on these occasions, burst into laughter at the most simple things. I suppose it's because they are happy, and perhaps they see more humour in what I say than I can.'

A small house with two rooms was given to Lazerus, and there he and Jessie took up their abode.

On the Monday after their marriage, a week's provisions had to be bought, and as Jessie had no experience in marketing, Lazerus went with her. He put on his

long white coat, his fine red turban, and his red shoes, and stepped grandly forth.

Jessie, a short, round-faced, bright-eyed, happy young wife, wearing her beautiful marriage cloth, and carrying a wide, open-mouthed basket, followed behind.

In the basket there was a quart bottle, without a cork, for the lamp oil.

The oil commonly used by the poorer people in India for their small earthenware saucer lamps is castor oil, and when a man feels out of sorts and needing medicine, he takes a pull at the lamp-oil bottle.

Jessie got her basket three-quarters full of rice. She put in a little earthen pot on the top of the rice a little dirty-looking salt; she bought also some chilli pods, onions, garlic, and saffron, and placed them on the rice. The bottle was filled with castor oil, and should have been fixed securely, upright, deep in the rice; but as Jessie had not sufficient experience to know this, and Lazerus was too dignified to show her, she simply stood the bottle on the top of the rice, and raised the basket on to her head. Lazerus, after a good deal of higgling over half a farthing, paid the money, and then stepped grandly homewards, Jessie following behind with the basket on her head.

When they reached home, Lazerus came with tears in his eyes to Mr. Knox, and told him that the bottle of castor oil had upset, and that the oil had poured out among all his rice, and through the basket down over Jessie's beautiful marriage cloth!

Mr. Knox comforted him, and said, 'Never mind,

I will pay for the food you have lost, and Jessie will do better next time.'

For some time after her marriage Jessie did not behave well. Her life in the orphanage had been so much under authority, so much time allowed for work, so much for lessons, so much for play, that when she got married she thought that she could do just as she pleased, so, instead of attending in the forenoon to cleaning and arranging her little house, and cooking her husband's food, she wasted her time playing with the horsekeeper's wife, and idling about.

When Lazerus went for his food, about one o'clock, and found nothing ready, he would try to look stern, and would say, 'I am very hungry; is the rice not ready?'

'You can be hungry another time,' Jessie would reply; 'the rice is not ready yet.'

At length Lazerus came to Mr. Knox, and said, 'Please, sir, you must beat my wife.'

'I can't do that,' said Mr. Knox.

'Well, then, I must send her away,' said Lazerus.

'I can see,' said Mr. Knox, 'that she is very troublesome; I will speak to her.'

Jessie was called, and came with her hair all untidy, her cloth dirty, worn, and torn, and stood before Mr. Knox. Lazerus stood looking at her in a sulky, disappointed way.

Mr. Knox spoke to her kindly, and earnestly assured her of his protection, if she did well and tried to please her husband, and said, 'If you continue to give trouble and cause annoyance as you have done, I must reduce

your husband's pay. I increased it to enable you both to live comfortably together, but if you don't try to do your part you must both suffer.'

Jessie promised to behave better in future.

Soon after this a son was born; and this not only knit Jessie's heart to her husband, but led her to settle down to her household duties, so that after that there was peace and goodwill in her house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A JOURNEY TO TANJORE—BALAMBAL'S DECISION—MARRIED LIFE.

I HAD not heard from my wife since she went to Tanjore. My mother-in-law could not write, and I imagined that, having learned that I had become a Christian, she had forbidden Balambal to send me any message. My wife was now more than fourteen years old, and it must be, I thought, quite time for her to come and live with me. I had now sixteen rupees a month, and a nice house in the mission compound, so that I was quite able to support both my mother-in-law and my wife, if I could only persuade them to come and live with me.

Leave for a week was readily granted to me, so, putting on my best turban, and taking a brass drinking vessel, a straw mat, and some boiled rice tied in the corner of a handkerchief, and fifteen rupees rolled in my waistcloth, I went to the station. There was a great crowd going to a festival at Tiruputty, so that it was with difficulty that I got a ticket and crushed my way into a carriage.

With much squeezing and shouting, most of the people got into the carriages.

Although women and men of different castes were all crowded close together in the carriage, there was no murmuring. All were contented and cheerful. A fat Brahmin was compelled to sit half on the knee of a pariah, and a chuckler (leather-worker) was squeezed close against a holy mendicant, who, with his almost naked body and matted hair, was sitting in haughty silence. The Brahmin and the holy man did not like it; but what could they do? There was no time to choose their company, and they would have to wash off the defilement as soon as, and in the best way, they could.

At many of the stations there was a caste man with water, and when any low caste man wanted a drink he poured it into his joined hands, and so into his mouth. Everywhere there were boys with baskets containing biscuits, bread, fruit, and sweetmeats for sale.

Arriving at Tanjore, I spent the night at a choultry, and went next morning to call on my mother-in-law, and see my wife. How anxious I became as I approached the street!

I walked past the street once or twice before I could summon courage to approach the house where they lived. I saw some women at a well in the street, drawing up the water in their brass vessels by cords, hand over hand. Was Balambal among them? My heart beat fast. I slowly walked towards the group. She was there, and as soon as she saw me she ran into a house. She never treated me like this before. Why was she so shy? As I stood outside, my aunt came out, and said, 'Come in.'

When I was inside the house, she took my hand, and looking sadly, yet kindly, into my face, said:

'We heard that you had become a Christian. Is it so?'

'Yes,' I replied; 'but you will not be angry with me for that, aunt. It is a good religion.'

'What is the use of my being angry? What is done cannot be undone.'

'Where is Balambal?' I asked.

My aunt called her, and she came timidly and shyly, and stood behind her mother. What a tall, fine-looking young woman she had grown! She was more beautiful than I had ever seen her. She did not look at me, but stood with her eyes modestly turned to the ground.

'I have come to take you both to live with me at Coimbatore,' I said. 'I have a good salary now, and I can make you both very comfortable.'

'I am old now,' said my aunt, 'and I could not live among Christians. I do not know their customs, and they would not like mine.'

'Balambal will come?' I asked anxiously.

'She can go if she pleases. She is married to you, and a wife should be with her husband.'

Balambal smiled, and hid her face behind her mother's shoulder. I saw that she would not refuse.

'Will you go, Balambal?' asked her mother.

'I do not like to leave you,' she replied.

'She will go,' said her mother.

When I was alone with Balambal, I took her hand and attempted to draw her to me. She kept her face away from me, but I put my arm round her neck and kissed her.

'Oh!' she said, 'you should not do that.'

'Why not?' I asked, with my heart full of love for her. 'Are you not my wife?'

She allowed me to draw her to me, and then leaning on my bosom, she said, 'My husband, my own husband!'

Full of pride and joy I took my young wife with me to Coimbatore. How pleasant it was to see her look to me as her protector! to feel that I was now a man, and that I had entered on the joys and responsibilities of life! There seemed nothing left for me to desire. My cup of happiness was full to the brim.

Balambal lived quietly in her house in the mission compound. She was not a Christian, so she did not court the society of the Christian women; and being married to a Christian she felt estranged from the women of her own caste, so during the first few months of our married life I was her only companion. We were all in all to each other. Sometimes, it is true, she was sad as she thought of her mother; and sometimes she was vexed with me unnecessarily, and would even speak crossly, and put me out of temper.

But as time passed we gradually learned to treat each other with more kindness and consideration and when things did not go smoothly or when either was cross and vexed on account of anything, we learned to take as little notice of it as possible, and let the ill-temper pass away of itself, like a fire that goes out when it is not stirred.

Balambal refused for some time to go to church, but she willingly listened to me reading a chapter of the Bible every night and knelt with me as I prayed, so that

I had good hope that by-and-by she would follow my example and become a Christian.

Three months after I had brought my wife to live with me, Mr. Knox asked me to accompany him on a preaching tour into his district. He wished to try me in the work of preaching, and see whether it would be possible to train me to be a catechist.

There are several village churches connected with the mission, some of them as far as fifty miles away from Coimbatore town. Most of the converts in these out-stations were from the pariah class.

Mr. Knox's method of evangelising his district was not merely to travel over it as much as possible, and preach in the towns and villages, but to have a catechist and a mission school in as many places as possible. In this way, through the daily preaching of the catechist, and through the regular Scripture teaching in the school, the people are instructed much more thoroughly than they could be by an occasional visit and an open-air address from the missionary.

The presence of the catechist and the existence of the church give also moral support and courage to all who may be inclined towards Christianity. What attaches every Hindu, and even the lowest pariah, to his caste, is that it is his only protection against a sea of troubles; it is his nation, his clan, his trades union. Outside his caste, all men are alien to him; within it alone can he look for sympathy, brotherhood, and protection. He clings to it as a sailor to his ship; as a soldier, while in an enemy's country, to his regiment.

The hardest trial, therefore, that a man, whatever be

his social position, has to face in becoming a Christian, is the being made to stand entirely alone, without friends or sympathisers, if not his hand against every one, at least every man's hand against him. When, however, he sees a Christian community already existing, in joining it he is, in an important sense, but exchanging one caste, one clan or tribe, for another.

A low caste man, although not unpersecuted, gains much in becoming a Christian ; and he continues to live among his own people, and gradually brings them along with him. Thus, when once Christianity has gained an entrance into a pariah village, it makes steady advances. Every year there are some seeking admission into the Christian community. Many of these catechumens are very ignorant, only a step removed from the lowest savagery ; but they have sense enough to perceive that Christianity is a better religion than their own. Hinduism has ground them down for ages, and if not made them, at least kept them, the degraded wretches that they are. Christianity speaks to them of freedom, of progress ; it offers bright hopes to them, both for this life and for that which is to come.

There is nothing that so impresses the mind of these low caste people, and so wins their favourable regard for Christianity, as the improvement in manners and appearance and social position which they see in the Christians. When they observe that their neighbours who have become Christians are educated, that they are better clad and better housed than others, they are more easily convinced that the religion that has effected this improvement, is a religion that has come from God.

Mr. Knox and I started at half-past six next morning, our cart having left the evening before, and we had not gone four miles when Mr. Knox exclaimed, 'Is that our cart? What can they have been doing all night?'

The cart was moving along at a leisurely pace; Lazerus and Joshua were walking behind as we drove up.

'What is this?' shouted Mr. Knox. 'Why have you not gone on?'

'One of the wheels broke, and we had to take it to a blacksmith,' said Lazerus.

'I hope none of you got hurt.'

'I got my leg bruised a little,' said Joshua. 'I was the only one in the cart.'

'Come on as fast as you can,' shouted the missionary, as we drove past.

The village where we were to halt and spend the night was a dreary, deserted-looking place. There was only one little shop: the red mud walls round the back-yards of the houses were in many places partly washed away by the rain and broken by the goats that constantly clambered on them.

The keeper of the choultry obtained a fowl, some rice, milk, and plantains, and about noon I placed Mr. Knox's breakfast before him with a fresh plantain leaf for him to eat it from.

We chatted during the meal, until at length Mr. Knox asked me suddenly, as if recollecting himself, 'Have you had your food?'

'No,' I said.

'Well, go and take it: I ought not to have kept you talking so long.'

'I am in a difficulty,' I said. 'I went to the caste choultry, and the keeper abused me and drove me out. I told him that I was a caste man, but he would not believe me, because he knows that I am a Christian. I must buy new pots to cook with, and to drink water, because my own brass pot is in the bandy.'

'What are you going to do?'

'I must suffer. What can I do? I can't take my food where pariahs and others will look at me.'

'Give up your caste,' said Mr. Knox. 'It is nothing but a trouble to you. Your friends in Coimbatore who keep caste will not invite you to eat with them; but you will not lose their society. Your heart will be much lighter after you have broken the miserable bonds of caste.'

'I see that I must come to it,' I replied; 'but I won't do it to-day. I can buy some cakes in the bazaar.'

'Why is it that so few of the young men in the Church seek admission to the Lord's Supper? There are nearly twice as many women as men who are members,' Mr. Knox asked me that afternoon.

'They are afraid of Church discipline,' I replied. 'They are not like Europeans, who have been trained from infancy to live moral lives. Lying and stealing and drinking, and other vices, were not thought very wrong by them while they were heathen; they were even encouraged to commit these sins, and they cannot change altogether by becoming Christians. Their associations

are bad, and it is difficult for them always to resist temptation.'

'It is unreasonable, I know,' said Mr. Knox, 'to expect from them as high, upright, and pure a Christian life as from those who have been brought up in a Christian country, who have inherited Christian traditions and sentiments, and who are made to feel by all their associations the wrong and disgrace of such sins as you have mentioned; but the weaker they are the more they need the strength that a close union with the Saviour and the fellowship of the Church would give them. They are at least much better, however, than those of their own class among the heathen. You are not yet a member of the Church yourself; how is that?'

'I am not good enough, sir.'

'We are none of us good enough,' replied Mr. Knox. 'You have obtained the forgiveness of your sins, have you not?'

'I am not sure; how can I tell? I am trying to do God's will, and I hope that He will pardon my sins; what more can I say?'

'I thought that your faith was clearer and more assured than that,' replied Mr. Knox. 'A Christian ought to know that he has passed from death unto life. The Gospel is glad news of great joy, but it will not give us much joy or peace if it leaves us in doubt as to the pardon of our sins. This is the difference between Christianity and every other religion. All false religions leave men to seek pardon and deliverance from sin entirely by their own efforts,—by works of fancied merit.

In Christianity it is conferred as a free gift on all who trust in Christ.'

'But can any one be sure that his sins are forgiven?' I asked.

'Of course he can. Those to whom Christ said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," did they not know it? We too may know it as surely as they did. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved!" I know that I believe; am I not bound, then, to think, "I shall be saved?" "He that believeth is not condemned?" "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Do you not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?'

'Yes I do,' I replied, 'He is my Saviour. He died for me.'

'Then why not believe that you are "not condemned," that you "have eternal life," that you will never perish?'

'I never saw it like that before,' I exclaimed; 'but if I fall into sin, will Christ forgive every sin I commit?'

'You must try not to commit sin. If you think that because Christ so freely pardons you, you need not be particular about wrong-doing, then you have no true faith. If, with earnest desire and determination you trust in God for mercy for Christ's sake, and if you persevere in trying to glorify God by a pure and holy life, whatever sins, through weakness, or through being surprised by temptation, you may commit, God will forgive. Should you fall into any sin, you should immediately, earnestly repent and trust in Christ anew for pardon.'

'I have been trying to do God's will,' I said, 'but I often fail. I tremble sometimes lest I should fall into some great sin and bring disgrace on my profession.

You do not know the temptations to which one living among the heathen is exposed.'

'I wish to speak to you about that too,' said Mr. Knox. 'If you try to serve God in your own strength, you will fail. There are two lessons that we have to learn—one is, that we cannot obtain by our efforts the pardon of sin; we must obtain it as a free gift from God, through faith in Christ. That lesson I hope you have learned. The other is, that we cannot by our own efforts overcome temptation. The power to conquer sin we must obtain by faith in Christ. We come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain two things—mercy, or the pardon of sin, and grace to help us in our time of need. When Peter was walking on the water, he was afraid and began to sink, but when he cried to Christ, the Lord Jesus took him by the hand, and they both walked together on the waves. Peter afterwards denied Christ, because he was too self-confident. Had he looked then also to Christ for help, he would have been made bold as a lion. Be constantly on your guard, and when you are tempted seek assistance at once from Christ. You will not be disappointed. His grace will be sufficient for you.'

'All this is new to me,' I said; 'I never heard these things before.'

'You have heard them,' said Mr. Knox; 'but you did not understand them. Now, will you not commemorate the new light and joy you are receiving to-day by resolving to give up caste?'

My countenance fell, and I looked troubled.

'Remember what Christ did for you. He was rejected and despised. He voluntarily sank to the lowest degra-

dation in consenting to be crucified, for "Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree." Your caste is not of great value to you. It is a burden and a snare. It brings you into society that you had better give up, and it casts a slight on your fellow-Christians, many of whom you know and acknowledge to be as good as yourself; but I won't press the matter further. I have often spoken to you about this.'

'I cannot make up my mind all at once,' I replied; 'I am not so attached to my caste as I used to be. I have been thinking of abandoning it.'

'I am delighted to hear it; but I must not press the matter further to-day. I shall let it grow in your mind, and I have no doubt you will come round to see that you ought to give it up altogether.'

I experienced so much trouble and annoyance during the tour from my endeavour to keep caste, and my exclusiveness gave so great offence to the catechists and village Christians whom we visited, that I finally gave up my caste altogether, and lived and ate as the others did. What would Balambal say? I hoped the best. She had given up so much for me that I trusted she would consent to this also—that when she knew that the thing was done, she would think it could not be helped, and would reconcile her mind to it. She had so completely forsaken her own caste by marrying me and coming to live in the mission compound, that its entire renunciation would give her very little inconvenience.

CHAPTER XIX.

UNSATISFACTORY CONVERTS—A SERPENT—A RIVER FESTIVAL.

OUR first Sabbath was spent at a half-deserted town called Perunduray. Standing at the junction of four roads on the highway between Madras and Coimbatore, this town was formerly, when all travelling had to be done either on foot or in carts or palanquins, a place of some little importance, and its bungalow for travellers, now seldom occupied, was the scene of constant stir and bustle. The railway, passing four miles off, has destroyed the life of the town, and left it, like a tottering old man or a stream in summer, existing, but no more. The Christians from two villages, one eight, the other six miles distant, in opposite directions, had been asked to meet at the bungalow for religious service, and for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

They were to come at ten in the forenoon. At about eleven Mr. Knox called Aaron the Catechist, and asked whether the people had come. Aaron is a short man with a massive face and largish nose. His head and face he gets shaved once a week, so that on Sundays he is clean and smooth, and no hair is to be seen except

his eyebrows. Towards the end of the week his head and cheeks become covered with a rough white stubble His voice is usually husky, so that he has frequently to clear his throat, and he has a habit, when addressed, of blowing his nose into a large red handkerchief before answering. His manner to his superior is exceedingly deferential.

'The people from Patakarampolium have come, sir,' he said; 'but only two have come from Congicoil.'

'How is that? Are they not coming? Has the reader come?'

'Yes, sir. He and Samuel.'

'The reader says that the people won't come to-day,' I said. 'They are going to have a marriage.'

'They are not going to have a marriage to-day, are they? Where is the reader?'

'I am here,' said the reader. He had been appointed three months previously to carry on a school and conduct service in the pariah village of Congicoil. He was allowed the fees of the school, and a small salary in addition.

'Why are the people not coming?' asked Mr. Knox.

'There is to be a marriage to-morrow.'

'Among the Christians?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Who is to marry them? I have not been told about it. Have they asked one of the pastors to perform the ceremony?'

'No, sir; they are going to do it in the heathen fashion.'

'What!'

'Yes, sir. Most of the bride's relatives are heathen; and they won't allow her to get married to the young man unless some of their ceremonies are performed.'

'Oh, this is very bad,' said Mr. Knox. 'What is the use of their being Christians if they continue their former heathen practices?'

'Yes, sir; I told them that. I told them that you would be very angry, but they would not heed my words.'

'Will there be any use in my going to their village to-morrow?' Mr. Knox asked, turning to Aaron.

'No, sir, I think not. If you go the people will not come to meet you. Many will be in their fields, and the others will not come out of their houses.'

'If they persist in having the marriage in the way that you say, I will close the school, and take you away from their village,' said Mr. Knox to the reader.

'I will tell them, sir, and do what I can to persuade them to put off the marriage, and have it celebrated properly; but I don't think I shall succeed.'

'Well, call in those who have come, and let us go on with the service.'

Mats were spread on the floor, and a Bible and hymn-book, with the bread and wine, were placed on the table, which was covered with a clean white tablecloth. The people came in and sat on the mats, the men on one side and the women on the other.

After the service had commenced, a little dog that was tied in a side room, provoked by the singing, began to whine and bark. Mr. Knox rose, untied the dog, and took it to a door at the back of the side room to let it

out. I heard a few strokes on the ground with a cane, and then Mr. Knox, looking, I thought, a little paler than usual, returned and continued the service. After all was over, Lazerus went into the side room, and then came running out shouting, 'A serpent, a serpent!' I went in, and there a venomous snake was lying dead on the ground.

'Did you kill it, sir?' I asked, looking at Mr. Knox.

'Yes. There is no handle on the door, so I put my hand on the top, and as I pulled the door open the snake fell down.'

'It did not bite you?'

'No, but it was a narrow escape. It fell down from the very place where my hand was, and struck against me as it fell. I killed it, as you see, with the cane that I always have in my bedroom for such a purpose.'

The last place that we visited on the tour was Bhowany, a sacred town on the junction of two rivers, the Covery and Bhowany. The triangle of land where the two rivers unite is covered with temples.

The scenery is exceedingly beautiful. The two broad rivers are dotted and broken by picturesque rocks and small tree-clad islands. Tall sugar-loaf mountains, each with a temple on its summit, rise abruptly from the plain, which is rich with tall feathery palms, broad leafy tamarind, margossa, and mango trees, and bright with emerald green paddy fields. Beautiful parrots and wild pigeons flit across the river and among the trees, and thousands of other birds fly high overhead. The climate is moist and relaxing, and a very little exertion causes fatigue.

We were fortunate in being present during the celebration of one of the sacred feasts. Crowds of people of all ages and of both sexes, all in bright new clothing, thronged the steps along the banks, and chiefly at the most sacred place, where the two rivers unite and mingle their sacred waters.

Bathers, with their clothes on, plunged and splashed wherever they could find standing room, and the temple Brahmins walked among the crowds viewing the scene.

Beggars, clad as holy men, with yellow cloths, their brow, chest, and arms smeared with ashes, their hair and beard long and matted, their neck and arms adorned with beads, were beating cymbals, blowing conch shells, and forcing their way everywhere, demanding alms.

Most of the people were casting offerings of fruit, flowers, and money into the river, and a number of wretched youths were diving, struggling, and groping in the mud for the copper coins that were thrown to the river goddess. No one rebuked or hindered them, for no one cared what became of the offerings after the water had received them.

Parents brought their children, and plunged the head of their child and a piece of money beneath the surface at the same time. Two or three divers stood ready to snatch the coin that each father dropped before it could reach the bottom.

One group that we saw, evidently consisting of all the members of a family, performed an elaborate ceremony. On one of the granite steps they put a little of the river sand to represent the goddess, and arrayed in front of it offerings of jewels, money, flowers, fruits, and

small lighted lamps, consisting of a wick fixed in a saucer of dough. They broke cocoanuts in halves, and presented them to the goddess. Then each member of the party stood, one by one, in front of the idol, and raised their folded hands in worship.

Mr. Knox approached the group, the people respectfully making way for him, and, after looking at the worship for a little while, asked one of the elderly men of the party 'What god are you worshipping?'

'The goddess Bhowany,' replied the man.

'Where is she?'

'There,' replied the man, pointing to the river. 'She is flowing past.'

A younger man, standing a little aloof from the others, said in English, 'We know that all this is useless, that there is only one true God.'

'I am glad that you have these enlightened views,' said the missionary. 'Are you a native of this place?'

'No; my native place is Salem.'

'For what purpose have you come to Bhowany?'

'For the festival.'

'Have you, with all your enlightenment, actually come from a distance to perform these useless ceremonies?' asked Mr. Knox, in astonishment.

'What can I do?' replied the young man. 'I must follow the custom. According to the proverb, if one lives in a country where all go naked, one must do the same; if nine men do one thing, the tenth cannot hold back.'

'If nine men eat poison, must the tenth eat it also?' Mr. Knox asked.

'These ceremonies are all useless, except for our benefit. In this way we get our living,' said one of the beggars.

'Yes,' said Mr. Knox, and quoted a verse from a Hindu poet ridiculing the idea that the water of a river can wash away sins.

The people listened, not displeased, but some of the lazy, ignorant temple Brahmins looked on scowling.

'What does the missionary here? curse him!' I heard one say; 'he would like to prevent the people coming, I suppose, and rob us of our gains. I wish I could put a spoke in his wheel.'

'It's not so easy,' said another; 'we can't do much, except perhaps to get some low fellow to insult him and raise a laugh.'

'Couldn't we draw him into an argument, and put him to shame?' suggested a third.

'I fear the shame might fall on us,' replied the first. 'Some of the ablest men in the town called on him yesterday. He received them with perfect politeness, but sent them away quiet and thoughtful. I hear that they have had enough of him, and don't intend to repeat their visit.'

'Who were they?'

'Vecraswamey, the pleader, and Krishnaras, the late judge of the Moonsif Court.'

'Ah! then we had better keep away from him.'

'Besides,' said the other, 'some of the learned and respectable people in the town seem somewhat in favour of his teaching. They say that he teaches good morals and reasonable doctrines, and carefully

avoids insulting the Hindu religion. What can we do?'

'Ah yes, what can we do?' asked the others. 'We'd better let them alone.'

On my return Balambal received me kindly and fondly. It was our first separation since she had come to live with me, and we had both felt the absence long, and were glad to be together again. How much pleasanter it was for me to be welcomed by a loving wife, busying herself about my comfort, and showing by every word and look that there was one in the world to whom my existence was necessary. How much pleasanter this than to return to the tender mercies of my stepmother, or to an empty house!

Absence had made our hearts grow fonder. I never felt more in love with my good little wife, and she looked brighter and happier than ever she had done before. Taking her on my knee, and putting my arm round her waist, I said, 'Balambal, do you love me very much?'

'Yes, I love you. Why do you ask me that?'

'You are very glad that you have come to stay with me?'

'Yes; why should I not be glad? You are very kind to me; and although I was afraid to come and live among Christians, I have lost all that feeling. Every one has been very kind to me while you were away. Mrs. Knox is a very good lady. She came often to see me, and she called me often over to the bungalow to talk with her.'

'You would not like to leave me now?'

'No; but why are you asking those questions?' she

said, taking her head from my shoulder, and looking inquiringly into my face.

'I wish to tell you something, which I hope will not make you angry.'

'What is it?'

'I have broken my caste.'

She did not move from her position.

'I suffered very much in travelling among the Christians by trying to keep caste, and Mr. Knox wished me very much to break it, so I at last agreed. I see now that it is not right for a Christian to keep caste, for all men are brethren. God has made of one blood all the nations on earth. What do you say, Balambal? Are you angry?'

'No, I am not angry, but I wish you had told me before you did it.'

'I should have done so if I had been here, but I thought it was better not to give you the trouble of thinking about it and deciding.'

'When I came to live with you,' said Balambal, 'I gave up everything for you. You are my husband—your caste is mine.'

'And will you become a Christian too?'

'Yes,' she said. 'I have been thinking much about it. Mrs. Knox and Miss Philp have been talking to me, and I have been almost persuaded. I know that there is only one God, and I believe in Jesus Christ. Now that you have broken caste, why should I hesitate to be baptised?'

'This is the best news I have heard in my life!' I exclaimed; 'I must go and tell Mr. Knox.'

'No,' said Balambal, 'you are tired now, and your rice is ready; you can tell him another time;' and she tripped into the other room to spread my mat and serve my curry and rice.

My wife was baptised and I was admitted to the Lord's Supper on the same day.

Mr. Knox, and indeed all the people in the church, seemed to share my joy with me. Mr. Smith congratulated me heartily on my change of opinion regarding caste, and invited me to take tea with him next day.

Not long after Mr. Knox raised me to the position of catechist.

My mother-in-law came once to see us, and was pleased to find us so comfortable and happy, but she refused to live with us. She returned to Tanjore after waiting three days. My stepmother I never see. She was, I was told, glad that I had become a Christian, because by so doing I lost my share of my father's property.

Meenatchy, I heard, forsaken in the famine by her husband, wandered to Caroor, where she was received by the kind Wesleyan missionary there, in whose orphanage she is now employed as cook-woman.

Miss Philp married a police superintendent, and went to live at Salem.

Mr. Knox is preparing to leave for England on furlough. I am sorry to lose, even for so short a time, so true and kind a friend.

I have never regretted becoming a Christian, and Balambal is not sorry that she came to live with me.

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